

# RELIGION IN LIFE

A CHRISTIAN QUARTERLY of opinion and discussion

---

VOL. XXIV

Spring, 1955

No. 2

---

## CONTENTS

### **The One Church and Our Many Churches . . . . . 163**

*Toward What Sort of Union?*

THEODORE O. WEDEL, T. A. KANTONEN, C. C. MORRISON

Unity and Ministry.....	DAVID C. LUSK	195
Religion Among the Novelists.....	JOHN J. BUNTING, JR.	208
The Lay Christian and His Vocation.....	DWIGHT W. HARWELL	219
The Christian and the Liquor Problem.....	OSCAR F. GREEN	228
John Wesley and His Preachers.....	DOUGLAS R. CHANDLER	241
The Danger of Preaching.....	PHILIP SHEN	249
Time and the Christian.....	WINSTON L. KING	257
Evangelical Christianity and Social Concern.....	D. IVAN DYKSTRA	269
The Olney Hymns.....	JOHN H. JOHANSEN	278
The Christian Message and Mythology.....	JOHN ROBERT VAN PELT	291
Book Reviews .....		297
Book Notices.....		319

## Preparation for Ecumenical Communion

ERNEST A. PAYNE

WE HAVE come to one of the most solemn and joyous, and yet at the same time most poignant moments of this Assembly. . . . We come perplexed, frustrated, in danger of being impatient with one another. . . . It is grievous that we shall not all participate together at the same Table. But in a service of this kind, it is to the tremendous affirmations that we should turn our thoughts. . . . "The sacrament is a sign commemorative of the Passion of Christ, demonstrative of Divine Grace, and prophetic of Future Glory." (Thomas Aquinas)

(1) First, the Passion of Christ. . . . The ground of our faith lies in God's revelation of Himself in Christ; the revelation in Christ centers in the Cross; and the Cross is to be understood not as a tragic martyrdom, but as a self-offering by the Sinless One for the sins of the world.

(2) Secondly, we have in mind the wonder of Divine Grace, communicating itself to us in spite of our sinfulness and unworthiness, coming to us again and again as we take the appointed bread and wine in remembrance of Christ. . . .

(3) Thirdly, what we do is "prophetic of Future Glory." "Ye do preach the Lord's death, till He come." There is in the Communion Service a strange victory over the tensions in time between the present age, the age that comes in Jesus Christ, and the age that is yet to come. . . . At the Table what happened in Jerusalem two thousand years ago, what is happening here and now, and "the glory that shall be revealed" are inextricably joined.

—Sermon by Dr. Payne at the service of preparation  
for Holy Communion, Evanston, August 21, 1954.



# The One Church and Our Many Churches

## Toward What Sort of Union?

THEODORE O. WEDEL

### I

CHURCH LEADERS concerned with discovering practical steps toward the reunion of the churches must have found the Evanston Assembly disappointing. Reunion projects were scarcely mentioned. Even the Section on Faith and Order confined itself largely to biblical explorations and modest hints looking toward increased mutual brotherliness. And the Faith and Order concerns involved, at best, only a small fraction of the Assembly's membership. To many a participant the fact that an Ecumenical Assembly could adopt a gigantic agenda and spend more than a fortnight in floods of talk, with reunion projects deposited as checked baggage at the entrance door, must have come as a surprise. Ecumenism evidently is one thing; church reunion something else.

This paradox of ecumenism—the forming, as Oliver Tompkins phrases it, of a “community to disagree”—is most clearly seen in the relation to the Ecumenical Movement of the Orthodox Churches, and some members of my own communion, the so-called Anglo-Catholic wing. The orthodox formulate their position with painful bluntness. One Orthodox analyst<sup>1</sup> describes the result thus far of ecumenical discourse between church traditions as one in which “the fundamental differences have grown all the sharper and more unsurmountable. At the present day, to discuss the prospect of a formal unification of Christendom means either to indulge in naïve dreams and disregard the realities of church-life, or to hope for a miracle. . . . The unity dreamt of by the founders of the Movement has not been, and indeed could not be, attained.” The prospect, far from persuading this Orthodox observer to belittle the Ecumenical Movement, leads him to compare it to the miracle of transfiguration. “The Transfiguration of our Lord should be its feast day.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Zander, L. A., in *Vision and Action*, London, Gollancz, 1952, pp. 27, 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

---

THEODORE O. WEDEL, Ph.D., S.T.D., is Director of Studies and Warden at the Washington Cathedral College of Preachers, and Canon at Washington Cathedral, Washington, D. C.

The cause for rejoicing consists in the discovery of ecumenism's eschatological dimension. We have in common the *name* of Christ; we recognize one another's baptism; and "we are all ascending the same mountain (though on different sides of it) and contemplate upon it the same Christ." Even Rome does not unchurch us eschatologically. This eschatological interpretation, consequently, "is independent of all historical failures. The prospect of 'always being divided' is not terrifying for it; the whole history of the Church is the history of divisions and cannot therefore be regarded as a kind of preface to the still unwritten book on unity; the historical tragedy of Christianity is an inevitable condition of sinful humanity—and it is this sinful reality that is the object of eternal transfiguration and of future *parousia*."<sup>3</sup>

I cite our Orthodox observer, not because I wish to underscore his historical pessimism—he himself would hail with rejoicing historically possible reunion projects—but because the emergence in our time of the Ecumenical Movement, understood as a miracle of God's grace in its own right, can furnish a new setting for church unification unknown to earlier generations. The word "relax" is being cheapened in common speech today; yet it can apply to our state. The urgency to witness unitedly to the world is, to be sure, becoming unbearably acute. Our mission fields, now being transformed into "younger churches," cannot live on a hope for church reunion deferred to the *parousia*. They demand at least tokens of realized eschatology—church union now. Yet the fact that there are delays in finding immediate solutions to the ecclesiological reunion problems need not mean a complete halt. Ecumenical walking together, and even "growing together" (the Evanston Assembly has given us this appealing, though ambiguous, slogan) can accelerate. Granted that the paths up the mountain of final transfiguration, to repeat Dr. Zander's figure of speech, may run parallel for a time longer, we can, if only we remain abreast and communicate while we are on our joint pilgrimage, enrich one another's life "in Christ" to where convergence is inevitable.

Convergence is, as a matter of fact, proceeding apace now. The liturgically trained Episcopalian, to cite one instance out of many, is noting the increasing resemblance to his own tradition, in architectural and worship forms, of the churches of his neighbors. There are undoubtedly more crosses today on the holy tables of Congregational meetinghouses, or even those of so-called Pentecostal background, than in the whole of the

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

(Anglican) Church of Ireland, where they are, as a matter of fact, still forbidden by canon law! He is, indeed, often minded to warn his Free Church brethren to pause in their march toward liturgical enrichment and to view it critically. Random liturgical borrowings from the older traditions of Christendom may not be rediscovery of liturgical "Common" prayer at all. It may be far more a symptom of individualism in worship than rigid adherence to stark, but communally shared, worship forms of the Puritanism of the seventeenth century.

Nevertheless, the convergence of our traditions in the realm of worship, however mistaken in detail, holds much promise for the future. So does the harvest of historical study in the theology of the eucharistic sacrifice (I choose again a liturgically orientated illustration close to Anglican concern). The revolt against the "sacrifice of the Mass" was notoriously one of the major battle cries of the Reformation. Anglicanism is rightly suspected of having retained the sacrificial note in its eucharistic theology—this fact constituting a very serious reunion problem for Anglicanism's more "catholic" members, since union with a Reformation tradition seems to demand surrender of this catholic note, as well as Anglicanism's emphasis on the minister as sacrificing "priest." Contemporary liturgical scholarship, however, is revealing the fact that the whole medieval theology of eucharistic sacrifice, against which the Reformation revolt was directed, was founded on a mistaken interpretation of the biblical evidence—the supposition, namely, that the essential action in sacrifice consisted in the death of the victim. Substitute for this the Blessing ("He blessed the bread and brake it"), and the cruel debate on sacrifice in the Holy Communion receives a fresh orientation.

E. L. Mascall's *Corpus Christi*<sup>4</sup>—the author a leading Anglo-Catholic theologian—summarizes this important rediscovery, citing many Roman Catholic scholars. It might surprise Protestant readers. Sacrifice as "praise and thanksgiving" (*sacrificium laudis*) and as sacramental memorial should not disturb evangelical conscience. Indeed, rediscovery of the importance of the sacraments in the life of the Body of Christ, inevitable when their anchorage in the New Testament Church is fully realized, is advancing on Protestant soil.

Amsterdam was still under compulsion to define the Catholic-Protestant gulf as constituting the ultimate ecumenical problem. Any convergence of these polarized traditions is, for Anglicanism, of outstanding importance.

<sup>4</sup> Longmans Green and Co., 1953.

It opens doors to participation of its Anglo-Catholic wing in reunion conversations from which it has hitherto felt compelled to stand largely aloof. For, unless Anglicanism is prepared to face a schism in its own corporate life, reunion projects must carry the endorsement of a major faction at least of its Anglo-Catholic members.

It is the conviction of the present writer that the best hope for seeing dreams of church union realized in the measurable future—a union or series of unions in which Anglicans can become wholehearted partners—lies in accelerating ecumenical convergence. The outward form which a united Church could take is not, granted once more Anglicanism's inclusion, too great a problem. The Church of South India, or, better still, the scheme envisaged for the church reunion in Ceylon, could furnish first sketches or projections. The difficulties many Anglicans still find in these schemes, as indeed in most reunion conversations, lie in the realms of theological interpretations of the forms and of their corollaries. The eucharistic sacrifice and the ministry as a priesthood are examples.

## II

As an Anglican surveys the ecumenical scene, there are at least two further large areas of misunderstanding or dispute as between Anglicanism and Reformation traditions in which mutual convergence is a requisite for the happy outcome of reunion projects. One of these is, of course, the historic episcopate. But there is also another which has not as yet, to my knowledge at least, been fully brought into the open. This concerns the place Confessions or Creeds should occupy in a united Church. Anglicans still lay down as a condition for reunion (see the Lambeth Quadrilateral) the acceptance of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. What is the position occupied today by our sister communions on this, for Anglicanism, vital concern?

The Lausanne and Edinburgh conferences on Faith and Order went so far as to declare: "We acknowledge the Apostles' Creed and the Creed commonly called the Nicene, as witnessing to and safeguarding that faith, which is continually verified in the spiritual experience of the Church and its members." This, if wholeheartedly accepted, might satisfy Anglican conscience. But as the Lund Conference debates could prove, and ecumenical discourse generally, the Free Church traditions would find acceptance by no means easy. Revolt against Creeds and Confessions (usually not differentiated) is a mark of their history and genius. Some at least

of the historic Reformation traditions, in turn, with their long and heroic loyalty to their respective Confessions in their very lifeblood, find the idea of a united Church without confessional subscription almost inconceivable.

On this issue of Creeds and Confessions, Anglicans find themselves in a median, if not unique, position. As over against the historic Protestantism of Reformation lineage, Anglicanism differentiates itself in never having been a Confessional Church at all—a fact which sets its history strangely apart. As a trusted Anglican theologian puts it: "In England we were not permitted to form systems of divinity and confessions, to supplant what had been accumulating by means of the writings of schoolmen, the decrees of councils, the bulls of Popes. By a series of acts, some violent, some accidental, we were brought into direct opposition to the rest of Christendom."<sup>5</sup> If, accordingly, subscription to a Confession is made as integral part of a reunion scheme, Anglicans would join their Free Church brethren in protest. Even Anglicanism's Thirty-Nine Articles, although still valuable guideposts to Anglican history, are not the real bond of union between the daughter churches of the Church of England.

The protest could point to the fact that Confessions, as post-Reformation history has witnessed their proliferation (Rome, after Trent, joining in this development) were unknown in the Early Church. It could also call to witness the experience of our recent ecumenical assemblies. Evanston, to cite the example vivid in memory, found the formulation of a theological definition of Christian hope acceptable to all impossible. Anglicans, I venture to suggest, were not surprised, nor greatly disturbed, so long as the promise of a "coming again to judge the quick and the dead" was not read out of the Bible or the Creeds. Freedom must then be left to the Church's theologians to interpret the meaning of this future "mighty act" of God in ways which may vary from age to age or as between one Christian group and its neighbors.

But if Anglicans are at one with their Free Church brethren in denying the necessity for reunion of subscription to a Confessional system of doctrine, they are compelled to hold tenaciously to the retention of the historic Creeds. And they would ask those who object to "Creeds and Confessions" as guardians of Church membership whether they are not permitting opposition to the latter to include the former because of failure to differentiate

<sup>5</sup> Maurice, F. D., *The Kingdom of Christ*, Everyman Edition, Vol. I, p. 249.



between them. It is a continual surprise to an Anglican participating in ecumenical discourse to find the mistaken notion abroad that the Creeds are equivalent to legalistic standards of belief—in other words, miniature doctrinal systems. They are “standards,” true enough, as is the acceptance of Christ as “God and Savior” set over the entrance gate of the World Council of Churches itself. But a declaration of loyalty to a Person and an identification of who that Person is cannot properly be equated with a doctrinal Confession. To refer again to one of Anglicanism’s wisest theologians—namely, Frederick Denison Maurice:

We are baptized into the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The creed is the confession of the same Name. It is not a digest of doctrines or a summary of religious opinions. It is an act of allegiance or affiance to a Person. The creed, being a common and united form of utterance which the Church puts into the mouth of all her members, is a safeguard against the identification of the Gospel with any of the particular interpretations of it that have been or are held by different individuals or schools of thought. It recalls all who repeat it from the divisive and mystifying controversies of speculative divinity to the plain confession of God Himself and His gracious and uniting acts for us men and for our salvation.<sup>6</sup>

Thus understood, the historic Creeds are precisely a charter of freedom from the tyranny of historically conditioned doctrinal systems and Confessions to which the Free Church traditions have heroically witnessed. On the other hand, they guard against exposing the revelation of God’s mighty acts recorded in Holy Scripture to purely individualist interpretation and the ever-recurring danger of heresy. Has not the era of “Arian” Liberalism, now painfully being outgrown, proved the need of at least a minimal creedal identification of the Actor in the drama of redemption as God himself, his Son declared to be “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God”? The Creeds are acts of allegiance and personal commitment—the verbs of the Creeds constituting the “scenario” of the drama of salvation, knowledge of which as “good news” can alone win the proud heart of man to such personal trust-surrender. The recital by the Church of the scenario is not itself the act of allegiance. This verb-summary might even contain details against which the critical historian places a question-mark (the Virgin Birth, for example). But for Christian faith the main “plot” of the action must remain intact—the story of deity for love of men coming *down* from heaven, dying on a cross, rising again, and present with his people as Holy Spirit. The Creeds assure the Church’s adherence to

<sup>6</sup> A paraphrase and summary of Maurice’s many defenses of the creeds in Alec Vidler’s *The Theology of F. D. Maurice*, London, S.C.M. Press, 1948, pp. 123-126.

this Trinitarian "recital-theology" as basic to her existence. Anglicans—and some representatives of other traditions will agree—cannot conceive of a church union which omits acceptance of the historic Creeds, for liturgical use at least, as one of the guardians of faith.

### III

If I turn now to the second area of ecumenical discourse in which Anglicanism occupies an apparently unyielding position, that which concerns the Episcopate, I confess embarrassment. Can anything novel or contemporaneously helpful be said on the subject? Anglican libraries contain whole shelves of volumes on this controversial topic, though one suspects that, for the most part, only Anglicans read them. For, in ecumenical confrontations, Anglicans do not wholly agree among themselves on how far they must demand acceptance of a doctrine of Apostolic Succession before union with a non-Catholic communion can be realistically envisioned. Is Catholic church order of the *esse* of the Church, or only of the *bene esse*? Must the problem of validity of the sacraments (baptism a curious exception, however) be clarified to the point of doctrinal unanimity? Or could the Anglican fall back upon the non-Confessional genius of his tradition and be satisfied with a pragmatic acceptance of episcopal church order, leaving doctrinal interpretation free?

Into the intramural debate within Anglicanism I shall not enter here, except to suggest that even pragmatic acceptance of the historic episcopate cannot possibly take place in a theological vacuum. Some convergence in understanding of its meaning must accompany acceptance if Protestant conscience is not being asked to accept a sacramental form as sheer magic or as a doctrinally indifferent institutional ordinance. I shall limit myself, accordingly, to a brief analysis of developments in the area of mutual ecumenical "walking together" which may even now be at work in lessening the gulf which so stubbornly symbolizes the Protestant-Catholic tension.

It is, first of all, obvious that a functional episcopate is being accepted as normal in almost all Protestant communions. The term "general minister," current in American Congregationalism, to cite a striking example, is almost a literal translation of the original meaning of *episcopos*. The fact that its novelty may be by conscious design and a lingering mark of nonconformity may be regretted by Anglicans, but it is a sign of convergence, nevertheless. Evidently, the conviction that the idea of the Church cannot

be fully expressed in the form of the atomized and autonomous congregation (if this, indeed, was ever true of historic Congregational church order) is receiving visible acknowledgment. For convergence with Catholic church order, it is important to note that the unity of the Church across local manifestations is being symbolized in a single "person" and not merely in a council of ministers.

One may note further that something may be happening to the size of the unit which the word "Church" designates. More than one observer has called attention to the fact that Congregational church order (Presbyterian polity occupying a median position) differentiates itself from Catholic church order most obviously in precisely the size of the unit which, from that point on, is unified in councils. In Catholic church order, this is the diocese; in Congregational church order, it is the local congregation. Contenders for the historic episcopate can argue that the emergence of diocesan moniscopacy had no more sinister origin than the virtual impossibility for the early Christians to think of the Church, even in a local manifestation, as other than all baptized members in a city like Corinth or Rome or Ephesus in one sacramentally unified household. Picture the original nuclear congregation presided over by a single president of the eucharist (nomenclature fluid as between bishop or elder) and it would resemble Congregational church order. When the nuclear congregation proliferated, this sense of unity was preserved, however, by way of retention of the single personalized symbol of the oneness of the sacramental Body, the servicing of subsidiary congregations now requiring delegated authorization. The diocese had come into existence and the differentiation between Bishop and Presbyterate.

The above sketch is undoubtedly an oversimplification of the story and leaves to one side the problem of how it all started. To trace it back to the apostolic founders of the Christian flocks of primitive times is, surely, once again, not a sinister conception. The rise of ordination rites ensuring orderly succession and recognition of unity across geographical boundaries must very early have been a virtual necessity. If today Anglicans ask their brethren to consider "contracting back into history" and recovering a diocesan ministerial ordering (in other words, a twofold ministry of Bishop and Presbyter), they can appeal to a theological anchorage. The unity of the Church in a bounded territory in which Christians are neighbors can receive New Testament validation. Can St. Paul's address to the Christians in Corinth as "*the* Church of God in Corinth" mean anything less? The



Apostle would have been scandalized had he foreseen our neighborhoods breaking their unity on a Sunday as we scatter ourselves among a dozen or a score of separate denominations. Are we not mangling the Body of Christ?

That episcopal church order, designed to unify all Christian flocks in a territorial unit under one Father-in-God, is the only way in which the oneness of the Church can be expressed, may be open to question. Unity, and not necessarily one form of church order, may belong to the *esse* of the Church. But episcopal church order can plead that it is the historically tested unifying organ of unity, one which grew up naturally in that period of the Church's life when the unifying force of the gospel was still irresistible.

Indeed, that some organ of unity across separating geographical boundaries and across the gulf separating one generation from another is a necessity for the unity of the Church, can be proved by non-Catholic church orderings themselves. Where is there a denomination today in which ministerial ordination is normally other than by the ancient rite of the laying on of hands—those already thus ordained by their ministerial elders alone having the right to hand on the sacred gift? Succession and careful guarding of continuity is not a monopoly of "Catholic" communions. We meet, in the modern era, not an episcopal ministerial succession confronting church orders with no ministerial succession at all, but a congeries of successions and guardings of continuity, differing from one another in their points of historical origin or in the extent to which continuity is consciously treasured in memory.

Judged from this point of view, the historic episcopal succession—apart from the question of its preserving the differentiation between Bishop and Presbyter—differs in *degree* of historic depth-anchorage from post-Reformation successions, and not wholly in kind. Anglicans refer to the historic episcopate, on occasion, as the "glue" of the Church. All ministries in the churches serve this function. The historic episcopate is the only one, however, which, without having altered its form, can claim to bridge the centuries back to the "Apostles' time." To an Anglican it seems as if the church orderings which arose in the Reformation era, because of their breaking the ancient form and starting life with virtually new successions, have lost vividness of memory of a thousand years of Christian history and broken fellowship with their fathers in the faith. A fully "catholic" and universal (and even ecumenical) concept of the Church must be one which

seeks to preserve the unity of the Church in time as well as in space. Hence Anglicans cling, with what must seem unbrotherly stubbornness, to a guarding of their historic church order even if this delays full sacramental oneness.

The above paragraphs suggest, however, that convergence in understanding the nature of the Church's ministry is not as impossible as it might at first appear. The gulf between Protestant and Catholic polities is not hopelessly unbridgeable. Here the Ecumenical Movement appears on the horizon once more as a miracle of God's grace to his scattered flocks. Martin Buber, in his well-known *I and Thou*, has made current the phrase, "Real life is meeting." In the ecumenical assemblies of the past generation, blessed "meetings" have been granted us. Trust is slowly replacing mistrust. Anathemas are no longer known. There has been "speaking the truth *in love*." We are, after all, in the perspective of world history, only a short time removed from the centuries of wars of religion. Ancient enmities, which once meant fire and sword, do not die easily, as anyone crossing the line between North and South in America can still experience, despite a century of Christian forgiveness. Urgency toward church unity can go hand in hand with trust in the silent and often hidden working of the Spirit. Over the doors of all ecumenical assemblies could be written the words of Pascal: "Human things must be known to be loved; divine things must be loved to be known."

*From T. A. Kantonen*

**S**HOULD THE GOAL of the ecumenical movement be the organic union of the various denominations or increased cooperation between them? In terms of actual policy this is to ask: Is ecumenicity moving in the right direction or must it change its course? The present direction is the search for unity through cooperation. It is a venture of faith, a determined joint exploration of the potentialities for unity in shared convictions, with a frank acknowledgment of the hitherto insuperable differences. On this road no one can foresee the ultimate outcome, but the organizational unification of the churches is not an end in itself. If it comes, it comes as a by-product of a genuine fellowship in the Spirit, as an inevitable result of a regenerative process which works from within to break down the old walls of partition.

Thus far the denominational structures remain intact. The Lund Conference made little progress toward the abolition of denominations and the Evanston Assembly still less. In spite of the widespread talk of the "scandal of denominationalism" and the "tragic fragmentation of the church," ecumenical conversation on basic issues, marked by a determined effort to speak the truth to one another in love, has brought to light such deep rifts both in faith and in order that any hope of healing them in the present generation is unrealistic.

The differences do not concern only matters in which the exercise of good will is adequate to bring about agreement. They reach down to fundamental convictions concerning the truth of the gospel by which the church lives. For example, the original report on "Our Oneness in Christ and Our Disunity as Churches" stated that the church is one because it is the one indivisible body of Christ into which all Christians have been incorporated through baptism. But when the report was presented to the section on Faith and Order at Evanston, a British Baptist at once objected to this statement. "My church," he said, "cannot accept the view that it is through baptism that one is incorporated into Christ. We hold to believers' baptism, according to which we are united with Christ through faith, and the outward baptism is only the seal of an already existing relationship." Here was Christian conscience expressing itself

---

TAITO ALMAR KANTONEN, Ph.D., D.D., is Professor of Systematic Theology at Hamma Divinity School, (a seminary of The United Lutheran Church in America), Wittenberg College, Springfield, Ohio; and the American member of the Theological Commission of the Lutheran World Federation.

with utmost sincerity on a matter of essential importance. Yet, for a Lutheran like myself to agree with the objector would have meant compromising an equally firm conviction that the initiative in my becoming a Christian belongs to God himself, that baptism is his own act and a means of his grace, that my faith is a response to that grace. So long as there is conscientious disagreement on such a central issue the time for organic union between Baptists and Lutherans has not yet arrived.

A still more striking and thoroughgoing expression of conscientious disagreement was afforded by the response of the Eastern Orthodox delegates to the report of the section on Faith and Order. Even after the document had been completely rewritten to eliminate any cause of offense, they found "the whole approach entirely unacceptable" and presented a separate statement of their own. In it they declared that "from the Orthodox viewpoint reunion of Christendom . . . can be achieved solely on the basis of the total, dogmatic faith of the early undivided church, without either subtraction or alteration." "We are bound," they concluded, "to declare our profound conviction that the Holy Orthodox Church alone has preserved in full and intact the faith once delivered unto the saints."

To correct the impression that such a position represents only stubborn self-complacency, one needs to remember Father Florovsky pleading earnestly for a recognition of the fact that there *are* major disagreements, warning against the deceptiveness of a unity achieved through the sacrifice of truth, and entreating divided Christians to respect one another's sincerity. The mood of Evanston, particularly of those who labored on the problem of the disunity of the churches, was far too sober to permit any wholesale condemnation of denominationalism as such. It led instead to a deletion of expressions implying that all divisions are the result of sin, and to long-range plans of theological study in the hope that the prayer "that they may all be one" may be answered in terms of its context, "that they may be sanctified in truth."

Is this situation to be deplored? Does it mean that the ecumenical movement has lost its momentum, perhaps even come to a dead end? Must it now undertake a new approach, with less theological discussion on the mystical body of Christ and more practical action in bringing together the divided church bodies?

There are many who do not hesitate to answer these questions in the affirmative. Most American Protestants in particular, caring little for theological subtleties (as Dr. Calhoun stated at Evanston) but gravely

concerned with the damaging results of our disunity, demand immediate action. We have had our fill of the unholy spectacle of numerous denominations, each claiming to be the true church and appealing to scriptural authority, engaged in fierce competition with one another. This strife has violated the mind of Christ within the churches and crippled the central task of Christendom, the winning of men to Christ. The Lord himself prayed for the unity of his people "that the world may believe." The necessity of bearing united witness of Christ to the non-Christian world has indeed been the most impelling drive behind the ecumenical movement from the very beginning.

At Evanston, too, it was the report on evangelism that sounded most clearly the note of urgency in solving the problem of disunity. It was a plea for "holy impatience" in dealing with the divisions impeding the missionary enterprise. The representatives of the young churches in the non-Christian lands continue to make it clear that for them Christian unity is no luxury but a life-and-death issue. The churches of Japan and of India have thus been impelled to tackle the problem with such vigor that they are already far ahead of the old churches of the West in the achievement of unification. The thirty-year plan of the Church of South India envisages as the condition of its success the transformation of the ecumenical movement in general into a similar actual union. Otherwise this church becomes just another denomination.

Despite a general recognition of the sincerity and worthiness of their motives, the proponents of organic union have not succeeded in making the World Council of Churches the agency for the realization of their objective. The official pronouncements of the Council are emphatic in their respect for the integrity and autonomy of the denominations. According to a resolution adopted at Amsterdam:

The Council desires to serve the Churches which are its constituent members as an instrument whereby they may bear witness together to their common allegiance to Jesus Christ, and cooperate in matters requiring united action. But the Council is far from desiring to usurp any of the functions which already belong to its constituent Churches, or to control them, or to legislate for them, and indeed is prevented by its constitution from doing so. . . . The Council disavows any thought of becoming a single unified church structure independent of the Churches which have joined in constituting the Council, or a structure dominated by a centralized administrative authority.<sup>1</sup>

The constitution of the Faith and Order Commission declares:

<sup>1</sup> Official Report, p. 127.



Its main work is to draw Churches out of isolation into conference, in which none is asked to be disloyal to or compromise its convictions, but to seek to explain them to others while seeking to understand their points of view. Irreconcilable differences are to be regarded as honestly as agreements. . . . Only Churches themselves are competent to take actual steps toward reunion by entering into negotiations with one another. The work of the Movement is not to formulate schemes and tell the Churches what they ought to do, but to act as the handmaid of the Churches. . . .

The "Toronto Statement" of the Central Committee of the World Council in 1950 reaffirms that the Council is not and must not seek to become a super-church:

It is not a Super-Church. It is not the World Church. It is not the *Una Sancta* of which the Creeds speak. This misunderstanding arises again and again although it has been denied as clearly as possible in official pronouncements of the Council. . . . Each Church retains the constitutional right to ratify or reject utterances or actions of the Council.

This position was strongly restated by Dr. Visser 't Hooft at Evanston: "It is a sign of confused thinking to speak of the World Council itself as the World Church. And it is completely erroneous to suggest that the World Council is or has any ambition to become a Super-Church, that is, a centre of administrative power. There is not a single Church in the membership of the Council which desires this; there is not one which would tolerate this."

While the World Council is dedicated to the cause of Christian unity and encourages the efforts of its member churches to enter into closer relations with one another, the fact remains that the Council itself is a loose association of completely independent churches. It must repudiate strongly the notion that it seeks to be a world church, because any move in this direction would jeopardize its very existence. The only course of action open to it is the promotion of good relations between the existing churches. It can bring them together to study the possibilities inherent in their "oneness in Christ," to discuss the meaning and causes of their differences, and to speak with one voice on world issues in so far as this is possible. Acknowledging that in its essence as the body of Christ the church cannot be but one, the strongest degree of actually manifest cohesion to which the Council dares to aspire is expressed in the question which the Lund Conference directed to the churches: "Should not our churches ask themselves whether they should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?"

Some churches show little inclination to proceed beyond this, but the spirit of the Council as a whole, as indicated by the Toronto Statement, is

"holy dissatisfaction with the existing situation." Through an intensive cooperative study of the nature of the church and of its essential visible marks, the word and the sacraments, the ministry, the form of structure, and the ways of worship, it is hoped that an increasing degree of mutual recognition will be attained, so that the various churches will manifest in their thought and life more and more fully their common belief in the "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church." The realization of this hope does not mean that the World Council will grow in power and authority. Quite on the contrary, the implicit objective of the Council is to render itself unnecessary, to decrease in the measure in which the churches themselves make progress toward unification.

A realistic appraisal of the existing situation affords indeed the hope that the prevailing trend toward organic union within denominations and between denominations having no fundamental differences will continue. But there is no reason to expect any sudden shift in the major grouping: the Roman Catholics, the Orthodox, the Anglicans, the Lutherans, the Reformed, the regional "united churches," the Protestant "free churches," the Pentecostal and Adventist sects. Even if American Protestants were to achieve the same kind of merger as the United Church of Canada, it would not materially change the total world picture. Nothing is to be gained by harping on the sin of disunity and trying to shame denominations into a surrender of their existence, so long as they regard themselves as standing on holy ground. And it is a mere begging of the question simply to insist that the church is already one in essence and should therefore be one also in fact, so long as there are divergent interpretations as to the meaning of the essential unity. It is still less fruitful to speak of the external advantages of union when men are convinced that the price to be paid for these is compromise with conscience. Is it not more to the point to explore the possibility that the conscientious disagreement which frustrates unionism may expose the erroneousness of this approach and itself contain positive Christian values which genuine unity must include?

Denominational loyalty that is rooted in conscience represents above all faithfulness to Christian truth as it has been actually experienced by individual persons. The axis of reality, insisted William James, runs through the hearts of individuals. He therefore waged a relentless fight against the Hegelian system in which he saw the each-forms being swallowed by the all-form. The Christian faith, at its deepest and most vital level, is not a matter of all-embracing principles or structures. It is the highly personal trustful commitment of the individual to the God who meets

him in Christ. It is conditioned by all the factors that characterize his individual existence and it manifests itself, therefore, in a variety of forms. The variety of denominations reflects the concreteness and the diversity of living faith.

The beginnings of plurality in the group manifestation of the Christian faith may be traced to the beginnings of the Christian movement itself. The earliest New Testament references to the church are all in the plural. The living Lord made his presence felt in scattered little groups, "where two or three were gathered together." They were united primarily by their common expectation of the speedy return of their Lord, but their working together, as in the case of the collection for the poor of Jerusalem, was incidental. Even after the concept of the universal church on earth, first set forth in purely spiritual terms in Ephesians, took shape and began its historical development toward Rome, local and regional *differentiae* continued to be prominent. The "church of Smyrna" and "church of Spain" were as distinctive as the Church of England and the Church of Sweden are today. The "nontheological factors" making for plurality have never been absent. Indeed they have their theological basis in the doctrines of creation and providence.

The fact that my commitment to Christ, under the providence of God, took place in the context of Finnish-American Lutheranism, not that of Greek Orthodoxy or the Mar Thoma Church of Malabar, is as inalienable a part of my spiritual life as the fact that I was born a Finn is of my personal existence. So important is the "grit of particularity," to use Hocking's expression, that I would betray something fundamentally sacred were I to regard as expendable the specific interpretation of Christian truth and type of worship through which God has become real to me. Since we "know in part and prophesy in part," I must try sincerely to understand and respect my Christian brother from another background, although his grasp of truth may appear to me to be still more "in part" than mine.

But in our search for common understanding, we must both beware the mistake of the legendary dog who lost the actual bone he was carrying while reaching for an illusory bigger bone. It simply is not true that disregard of denominational lines is always a sign of a higher level of faith and broader vision than denominational loyalty. According to a recent article in a popular weekly, the average churchgoer bases his decision regarding the place to worship on such considerations as the personality of the pastor, the way an usher greets him, or the ease with which he can park his car. If that is the case, then the crossing of denominational lines



is based on ignorance and indifference, hardly a sound foundation for ecumenicity. Better the tension and clamor attending the clash of vital convictions than the peace and quiet of spiritual death.

Besides preserving the values of the particular and the plural, conscientious denominationalism has its own vital contribution to make to ecumenicity. A world-wide denomination with an established and effective structure and program, theology and worship, ministry and mission, is already a tested working model of the church universal. And a denomination which is not convinced that it is the best working model, that nothing better could happen to other Christians than to rally around its banner, has already forfeited its right to exist. Sound ecumenicity cannot afford a wanton destruction of such banners even if that were possible. If the Orthodox and the Anglicans, for example, remain convinced that the continuity of indispensable Christian tradition is impossible without the "historic episcopate," the structure of the world church must be at least compatible with the retention of such an order. Before this difficult problem is settled, any organic merger on a world scale is inconceivable. It is for each denomination with similar unsunderable emphases in faith or order to make them unmistakably clear, no matter what obstacles they seem to present to a union of the churches.

The Lutheran emphasis is on the constitutive importance of sound evangelical doctrine. It is officially stated in Article VII of the Augsburg Confession: "To the true unity of the Church, it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike." Only the gospel is important, but it is all-important. In Luther's words, "The whole life and substance of the church is in the word of God." The church is not confined to any denomination but exists wherever the Spirit through the word and the sacraments generates faith.

But intercommunion and interchurch recognition presuppose unity in the confession of that faith. The rootless popular ecumenicity to which we have referred rests on the assumption that it makes little difference what a man believes so long as he is sincere and tries to lead a good life; and since all churches are engaged in the business of making good men, it does not matter much to which one he belongs. This caricature of Christianity is promoted by the usual lumping together of "race, color, and creed" as limitations which the highest kind of goodness transcends. Genuine Christianity has never been and can never be without a creed,

a public confession of the truth by which it lives. It was to the creedal statement, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," that the Lord responded with "I will build my church." This same confession, expressed by the apostolic Christians in the simple form "Jesus is Lord," contains the germ and the norm for the later more elaborate doctrinal statements. Since the faith of the church is based upon the objective truth of divine revelation, not upon men's own spiritual or moral aspirations, a firm grasp of that truth is essential. False doctrine which obscures the gospel of the forgiveness of sins, taught Luther, is worse than sin itself. A church indifferent to heresy is a church indifferent to the gospel. But where there is concern for the purity of doctrine, there indiscriminate tolerance becomes impossible and divisions necessarily arise.

According to a widespread misconception, the fragmentation of the church on the basis of doctrinal disagreement began with the Reformation. Yet the split between the East and the West, occasioned by a revision of the Nicene Creed (the *Filioque*), occurred five centuries earlier, and the splitting off of the Monophysites and the Nestorians a thousand years earlier. Indeed, from the very beginning, as soon as the church gave its faith conceptual expression, it was compelled to combat false doctrine which endangered the truth it held to be fundamental. The strong stand taken against the Judaizers in Galatians and against the Gnostics in 1 John shows both the existence of serious doctrinal controversy already in the primitive church and the apostolic determination not to sacrifice purity of doctrine to the will to stay together. The general policy of the organized church, which itself developed doctrines at variance with the original gospel, came to be the excommunication of dissenters. But whether alongside the main body of the church or within it, both during the first nine centuries of "the early undivided church" and through the Middle Ages, as well as following the Reformation, dissident groups have continued to exist.

In overthrowing ecclesiastical totalitarianism the Reformation not only gave institutional form to the evangelical concept of the church, the fellowship of people living by the gospel, but it also showed how poorly external authority had succeeded in bringing about true inner unity. The variety of differing doctrinal emphases was brought to light and accentuated, and their representatives were given a new status and a new opportunity for organization and growth. The obvious evils of modern denominationalism, narrow self-sufficiency, harsh intolerance, and destructive competition, must

not blind us to the fact that in many respects it is nevertheless an advance over the system which it supplanted.

History teaches us that the consolidation of ecclesiastical power renders still more dangerous the sinful self-centeredness of human nature which leads men to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think and to absolutize their relativities. In a situation of denominational co-existence, at least, one group of Christians cannot deprive another of the right to exist. Truth must be validated and error exposed through free and open discussion, not by coercion. Impetus is given to search the Scriptures, and the many-sided richness of Christian truth is brought out even when the motivation is supplied by varying special interests. Church membership is a matter of personal decision and commitment, not something automatic and conventional. People are bound together and impelled to witness and work by common convictions, instead of merely resting on inherited forms and traditions. It is under such conditions that the common faith obtains specific content and finds expression in living doctrine. It is a theology that is not handed down in *ex cathedra* pronouncements nor spun out of the private theorizing of individual thinkers. It is born out of the thought and life of a community of believers, loyal to the truth they know and sensitive to the Spirit who guides into fuller truth.

Today the Spirit is guiding these communities into a fuller realization of their oneness in Christ. Ecumenical conversation thus far has shown the extreme difficulty of formulating any significant doctrinal statement on which all the confessional groups can agree. The ecumenical mountain labors and brings forth such a mouse as the supplementary statement on the main theme at Evanston. In its officially accepted doctrine the World Council has been unable to advance beyond the simple Christological formula of the first century. But the starting point is sound, and the denominations themselves hold the key to progress. In so far as each is willing to re-examine its own doctrine in the light of the common goal of unity, and to enter into conversation with others not only to enlighten them but also to learn from them, will there be that consecration in truth which is the prerequisite of genuine unity.

What, then, is the nature of the unity to be sought? The unity of *amalgamation*? No. Christian congregations and church bodies are not expendable entities to be thrown into a melting pot from which is to emerge the church universal. A congregation in which the church universal is not already present is not a Christian congregation at all. All who live

by the gospel are already members of the indivisible body of Christ, branches of the one true vine. In so far as the specific forms of thought and work of any branch of Christendom are the workings of the Spirit, the attempt to obliterate them is a violation of the *pleroma*, the rich and diversified fullness of life in Christ.

The unity of *coercion*? No. The union of the churches dare in no way suggest the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics or the Church of the Grand Inquisitor, which was compelled to banish Christ because it had usurped his authority for itself. Any move toward mechanical uniformity, centralization of ecclesiastical power, or emphasis on external organization must therefore be firmly resisted. The true *una sancta* is the apostolic "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," not the *una sancta* of Pope Boniface VIII who transformed the term into a title for a world-wide ecclesiastical institution.

The unity of *voluntary cooperation*? As a fruitful working program for the present, yes. This is the kind of unity that does not sacrifice spiritual integrity to mere expediency, that preserves the positive values of diversity while making creative use of the things held in common. In its organizational aspect this may well mean a closer approximation of the federal pattern, so long as each cooperating unit retains the freedom to develop its own insights into the gospel and its own ways of making them effective for the edification of all. The only determinative principle in church government is that Christ himself rules his people. Where this sovereignty is recognized it cannot be surrendered to any human authority. Better a variety of orders than any compromise with this basic principle.

The progress toward unity achieved through denominational cooperation is encouraging. Anyone who has shared in the kind of ecumenical experience represented by Evanston can bear witness to the broadening of horizons, the deepening of insight, the transformation of attitude, and the quickening of spirit which it affords. One becomes overwhelmingly aware of the already existing reality of the one true church which is of God's own making, not an artificial mosaic to be put together by human hands. The living spirit of genuine ecumenicity is bearing fruit in the churches in the decline of the "better than thou" attitude, the growth of mutual recognition, confidence and comity, and the strengthening of the will to understanding and common effort. In the realm of theology it has rendered isolationism a thing of the past. The greater the depth of penetration into the truth that is in Christ, the less stable are the traditional denominational alignments, and a theology which has no constructive contribution to make to

the whole Christian fellowship does not deserve to be taken seriously by any section of it.

No one who has caught the ecumenical spirit and had a vision of its potentialities is satisfied to rest on what has been achieved thus far. But the goal is not adequately defined in terms either of the cooperation of autonomous denominations or of their organizational union. There is a third and higher alternative, creative integration, a unity of the Spirit richer and fuller than any process of ecclesiastical accommodation or elimination of differences. That is the objective which Dr. Visser t' Hooft has set before the World Council: "The Council cannot and must not negotiate unions between churches. But the Council can and must work to create a situation in which there is so much in common between the churches that there is no adequate reason for them to remain separate from each other." The true unity of the church is not eked out of poverty or dictated by outward circumstances. It is the result of an overflowing fullness of the Spirit. It is born and not made. An artificially contrived union of the churches as they are now, without a spiritual rebirth, would be a tragic substitute for the unity to which the Lord of the church is leading his people.

The ecumenical movement today is on the way to this unity. But the pace appears to some to be so slow that drastic accelerative measures are needed. One is reminded of the boy who watched a butterfly flapping its newborn wings in a struggle to break free from the cocoon to which it was still attached by a silken thread. Trying to be of help, the boy ran to get a pair of scissors and snipped the tiny bond, unaware that in so doing he made it impossible for the butterfly ever to learn to fly. Schemes of union born out of well-meaning but shortsighted impatience may perform a similar disservice to the emerging unity of the church. The one church, in the fullest sense, completely free from tensions and divisions, will indeed remain a transcendent norm and an object of faith as long as the life of the church is bound to the concrete particularities of history. The attempt to override historical reality will result only in a crippled ecumenicity. Resisting the temptation to concentrate on the rearrangement of externals, let the church follow the path to true unity by seeking greater depth in the knowledge of her Lord, sensitive to the Spirit who makes Christ a living reality to his people and binds the hearts of believers together in love.



*From Charles Clayton Morrison*

IT IS NOT THE PURPOSE of this writing to advocate "organic union." I believe that certain ambiguities in this concept bring confusion into the discussion of Christian unity. Instead, it will be my thesis that the many churches must disappear, in order that the One church, already existing, though invisible, may emerge. The distinction between these two concepts will be clarified as we proceed. (By "churches" I shall consistently mean, not local churches, but the Protestant denominations as churches. When the reference is to local churches, it will be so designated.)

I

The above distinction should not be applied in a way that discourages the widespread movement for the merger of denominations by twos or threes or, as in the Greenwich movement, by eight or nine denominations. These mergers rightly derive their deepest inspiration from the ultimate ideal of Christian unity. They look in the direction of the One church. The total ecumenical movement is appreciably furthered by their common recognition of the evil in our divisions and the purpose to overcome it if only in a limited area. Moreover, such mergers generate a spirit and atmosphere of unity in the process of uniting. They cannot be negotiated without implicitly, and even explicitly, condemning the present sectarian isolation of each denomination concerned. Thus, when a merger is consummated, the resulting new denomination finds that its sectarian roots have been loosened; it has emerged in some degree from the stifling air of its sectarian provincialism and come a measurable distance into the atmosphere of catholicity.

An interesting fact has come under my observation in connection with the Greenwich project for the union of eight or nine denominations which "recognize one another's ministries and sacraments." I have observed that the larger the number of denominations represented, the more simple is the problem of finding a basis of union. By "larger" I do not mean all-inclusive, for, if Anglicans and Baptists are included, there are such problems as the historic episcopate and immersion-baptism which do not yield easy

---

CHARLES CLAYTON MORRISON, D.D., Litt.D., recently retired after some forty years as editor of *The Christian Century*. His most recent book, *The Unfinished Reformation*, is a constructive exposition of the same theme as that treated in his present article.

solutions. But with these exceptions, when representatives of a large number of evangelical bodies meet in conference, their differences tend to diminish in importance. This is due to the discovery that they are differences in nomenclature applied to essentially the same structures and practices. Theological or creedal differences are practically nonexistent or irrelevant in such a group. The greatly exaggerated dissimilarities among America's Protestant denominations tend to fall away and their similarities emerge when they meet one another in an earnest search for unity.

But the merger movement is not informed by a concept sufficiently radical or dynamic to carry it beyond the denominational system. It can stop at any stage without self-contradiction. This is because it proceeds on the unchallenged assumption that the many churches are legitimate entities. Mergers are significant for Christian unity and contribute to it because their uniting churches are, so to speak, *on the way out* of the denominational system. But they cannot get all the way out while the denominational system survives. As Archbishop William Temple said, "So long as any of us are in schism, all are in schism." The goal of Christian unity—the very concept of Christian unity—can be understood only by coming to terms with (1) the nature of the One church as it exists in the mind of Christ, and (2) the nature of the many churches as the denial and frustration of the One church. This quest goes deeper than the organic union of denominations. In the end it may prove that mergers have made the most substantial contribution on our way to the goal. But with the emergence of the One church, the many churches will be excluded from any but a self-denying participation.

## II

The ecumenical movement from its beginning set up as its goal the achievement or recovery of the unity of the Church of Christ. Its goal was conceived at the first in terms of the unity of Protestantism. Later, when the movement was broadened to include all Christian churches throughout the world, the application of the concept of unity to Protestantism was blurred and, as it seemed to many, evaded. This has been explained by the fact that one or two denominations whose membership in the World Council is highly desirable but precariously maintained, would not allow the subject of Protestant unity to be frankly and forthrightly considered. Faith and Order was content to repeat year after year its standardized truisms concerning the unity of all Christians in Christ; the unity of the church in him, the sinfulness of our divisions and the urgent need for re-

pentance. But no serious attempt was made to find the locus of the sin of which we were exhorted to repent.

Happily, in the Evanston Assembly's pronouncement on "Our Oneness in Christ and Our Disunity as Churches," we have clear evidence that the World Council has been released from its former constraint. The document is meticulously theological. Its statements referring to the church's disunity seem to be needlessly cushioned with an overstress on everybody's sincerity. However, this is probably inevitable in a document that is recommended to the churches by so diverse a body as the World Council. Let some may have read it without discovering its crucial passages, I have isolated the following significant statements. (The italics are mine.)

1. We are compelled to "examine carefully how it is that our disunity as *churches* contradicts our unity in Christ."

2. "Only in the light of the unity of the church in Christ can we understand the difference between *diversity* and *division* . . . and their relation to sin."

3. "God has given to us today a fresh awareness of the element of sin which lies in the divided state which we have inherited."

4. "Confession of our oneness in Christ carries with it confession of oneness with our brethren in sin."

5. "We ask each other whether we do not sin . . . by claiming the vineyard for our own, by possessing *our church* for ourselves, by regarding our theology, order, history . . . as our own 'valued treasures.'"

6. "Concretely, this means that *churches*, in their actual historical situations, may reach a point of readiness and a time of decision *when their mission requires obedience unto death*. They must then be prepared to offer up their accustomed, inherited forms of life, by uniting with other churches without demanding complete certainty as to what will emerge from this step of faith. When churches have been ready in this sense to 'die with Christ,' they have found that He who raised Jesus from the dead is faithful and powerful still."

7. "In the World Council we still intend to stay together. But beyond that, as the Holy Spirit may guide us, *we intend to unite*. We do not ask the World Council to initiate plans for union, but to keep providing occasions for honest encounter between divided Christians."

8. "We cannot discern all that will be disclosed to us when we look to Him who is the head of the Body and affirm our oneness in Him. *We know that we shall be changed. But wherein we shall be changed we cannot know until we are given to discern, through crucifixion and resurrection, the lineaments of the One true Body of Christ which our sinful dividedness obscures from ourselves and the world.*"

These profound and penetrating statements register a point of advance beyond any utterance that has yet been made by the World Council. For the remainder of this essay I shall take as a text the italicized words in the above final quotation from the Evanston pronouncement.



## III

"... the One true Body of Christ which our sinful dividedness obscures from ourselves and the world."

The *churches* "obscure" the One *church*. This gentle indictment of our sectarianism could hardly be better expressed—unless it were expressed less gently! It is crucially important in our thinking about Christian unity. Protestantism lives in a multitude of man-made churches which obscure the One true Church of Christ. The One church is thus a hidden church.

What does the World Council mean when it affirms that the Church of Christ is One? This affirmation is repeated again and again in all its literature dealing with the faith and order of the church. But spokesmen of the Faith and Order department of the World Council frankly confess that they do not know clearly what this affirmation does mean! Speaking at Evanston, Canon Oliver S. Tompkins, secretary of the department, said: "We are united in the conviction that, in some profound sense, the church is One; we are divided and stultified over defining that unity." He suggests four possible definitions: (1) a sort of Platonic ideal church; (2) an eschatological entity whose unity is hid with Christ in God; (3) a visible historical community; (4) a "unity of the Spirit."

The way in which the unity of the church is to be "manifested," Canon Tompkins said, has caused even greater perplexity in Faith and Order than the attempt to define the nature of the unity itself. Nevertheless, there is complete agreement, (a) that "in some profound sense" the church is One, and (b) that the manifestation of its unity is an "urgent obligation."

Anyone, I think, must be impressed with the contrast between the state of mind of Faith and Order as revealed in its secretary's report to the Evanston Assembly, on one hand, and on the other hand, its pronouncement on Christian unity which we are here acclaiming. The former gives us no lead. It multiplies difficulties and inhibitions. It does not carry us beyond the vague idea that "in some profound sense" the church is One, while the manifestation of this obscurantist and elusive unity is put upon our conscience as an "urgent obligation." But the Evanston pronouncement provides us with the basis for a constructive attempt to invest with realism the problem presented by the obvious contradiction between the One church and our many churches. Not until this contradiction between "church" and "churches" is clarified can the sin of our dividedness be made specific enough to give realism to the solemn call for repentance.

For those who wish to continue the study of the nature of the church

at this profound theological level, I suggest that they must distinguish between the ecclesiological and the ecclesiastical approach to Christian unity. In its long-continued study of the nature of the church, Faith and Order has operated in the ecclesiological dimension. It has shown little interest in the ecclesiastical dimension beyond the bare observation that the empirical church exists in a sinful state of division. Its interest has been focused upon the theory, the doctrine, of the true church—in the New Testament and in a sound theological context. The necessity of such study cannot be questioned. But it represents only one side of the problem of Christian unity. This one-sided concern has probably been due to the fact that Faith and Order too narrowly focused its attention upon the single problem of the historic episcopate represented by the Anglican church, together with the bearing of the episcopate upon sacraments and ministry. This is an ecclesiological problem (Is the historic episcopate of the essence of the church?) and it cannot be evaded in any realistic study of the nature of the church.

But there is another ecclesiological problem, vitally related to Christian unity, which, so far as my knowledge goes, Faith and Order has not yet so much as touched. It is the problem of immersion-baptism. Does the practice of immersion in water belong to the essence of baptism, and therefore to the essence of the church? It is difficult to understand how Faith and Order could have operated through forty years upon the ecclesiological level without sensing the equal importance of this question with that of the historic episcopate. My guess is that the consideration of these two problems together would throw light upon both.

With these two exceptions, Protestantism presents no stubborn differences about the *nature* of the church. The churches are as much agreed with one another at this deeper level as their own memberships within each denomination are agreed. Their differences are ecclesiastical; that is to say, they concern the empirical church, the visible church, the church in history and on earth. This empirical church should be, according to ecclesiological theory, the manifestation on earth of the One true church. But it is not. It is not a church at all—it consists of many mutually exclusive churches, not one of which would claim that Christ recognizes it as his church. It therefore cannot be the empirical church that we mean is One.

#### IV

I wish to suggest a simpler way in which this distinction between the ecclesiological and the ecclesiastical church can be expressed. The church

whose unity can be affirmed is the church that exists in the mind of Christ. As Christians we all belong to it; not, however, empirically, that is, by experience, but by faith. We believe that Christ has received us, but his acceptance is incomplete because we have denied him the Body into which he would receive us. We can only unite with a fragment of his Body which we have unwittingly, or wantonly, broken into many sectarian pieces. This is the tragedy of Protestantism: it has no true church to which its members may empirically belong. It condemns those whom Christ has received to live the Christian life in isolated fragments of the true church, each itself an independent and autonomous ecclesiastical body.

Thus the One church is a hidden church, "obscured," as our text says, by our many churches. In a sense it is a phantom church. We cannot see it. It eludes our grasp. We do not confront it. Nor does it confront us to draw us into itself. It is an amorphous church, without form or body. It is intangible, invisible, and empirically inactive.

Why does the One true church exist in this impotent invisibility? The answer is because it has no organs by which to manifest itself in the actual world of human observation and experience. And why has it no organs? Because its organs have all been stripped from it by our man-made churches, each of which exercises by itself and for itself alone the functions and organs which belong by divine gift only to the One Church of Christ. These many churches are visible, empirical entities. We can see them and join them, for they have meeting times and meeting places where they manifest their empirical existence. They perform corporate or collective acts which they have taken over from the One church—acts which, because they have been taken over, cannot be performed by the Church of Christ itself.

What are these acts and organs of the One church which the many churches are exploiting? I name eight of them: Baptism, the Lord's Supper, ordination to the ministry, missionary expansion, Christian education, form of worship, creedal confession of faith and, finally, a distinct structure or polity which separates each of the churches ecclesiastically from all others. These are the churchly functions of our many churches. And each of them has been taken from the One church to which alone they were committed by divine gift. Christ did not give them to any part of his church, but to the whole body. But our denominational churches have torn them out of his Body and thereby banished his Body itself into the realm of invisibility and empirical impotence.

Here, then, is the sin of which we are to repent. It is specific, concrete,

recognizable, and evil beyond our human comprehension. Christ alone comprehends it in its indignity to him and its frustration of his divine mission. The son of our denominations, then, is in *being churches*. It is their *churchism* that is sin. It is not their special fellowships, their cherished traditions, their historical ideologies, their conscientious convictions, nor even their disagreements over the "nature of the church." There is no sin in any of these particularities. Indeed, there is virtue in our very diversities. The sin is in our building separate churches upon them. Our churchism is the locus of our sin. Basic and prior to all other manifestations of the church's unity is the abandonment of *the sin of being churches*.

## V

"... until we are given to discern through crucifixion and resurrection . . . the One Body of Christ."

This brief clause contains the most profound insight and the bravest word that has found expression in the ideology of the ecumenical movement. The idea that our churches must die and pass into the tomb that they may experience a resurrection as the One Body of Christ—this thought should pierce the conscience of the churches and bring us to repentance. It says what I have been longing to hear from the World Council, and what in less theological language I have been trying to say. It brings the profound ecclesiological conception of the nature of the One church out of its academic opaqueness into such immediate juxtaposition with the denominational system that the depth of evil in this system can no longer be concealed. One cannot talk lightly about dying, and dying by crucifixion, especially about voluntary crucifixion. The gravity of such an eventuation is the measure of the gravity of the situation in which Protestantism stands.

Yet we must be more explicit than is the Word Council concerning *what* is to die in order that the One church may emerge from the tomb. Not all that belongs to our denominations must die. Our denominations are not totally sinful, as our text might be taken to imply. All the treasures of our Protestant faith are held in these separate churches. They should not accept indiscriminate extinction. Their treasures must be preserved for the enrichment of the resurrected church. Their traditions are precious, their familiar fellowships are precious, their special witness to the Christian faith is precious. Their very diversities of doctrine and worship are precious. All these will contribute to the reborn church their spiritual vitality and resources for growth, in contrast to uniformity which spells stagnation.

None of these belongings of our denominations divides Christ's Body. *What divides his Body is our building and maintaining separate churches upon our particular treasures.* Christ himself welcomes and embraces our differences and gives us his Holy Spirit to help us reconcile them, and enable us also to appropriate the fresh diversities that will evermore break forth from the Word of God.

What, then, must the denominations leave in the tomb when they are resurrected as the One church? The answer should now be obvious—they must leave their *churchism* in the tomb. Their churchism is the only cause of division in Christ's Body. In the day of their resurrection they will not be *churches*. All the churchly organs and functions which the denominations had usurped would be restored to the One church to which alone Christ gave them. The empirical church would then be the manifestation of the One true church as it exists in the mind of Christ. And all the non-ecclesiastical treasures of the denominations would then become the possession of the whole church. Thus would be fulfilled St. Paul's great ecumenical declaration, "All are yours."

## VI

"But wherein we shall be changed we cannot know until we are given to discern . . . the lineaments of the One true Body of Christ."

As a cautionary word this clause in our text is pertinent. But the solemn form in which it is stated may discourage action for which Christians, under God, are responsible. It depends upon what is meant by "lineaments." If it is intended to discourage the making of detailed blueprints of the One church, it is wisely used. We are not competent to anticipate by visualization the richness and fullness of the blessing which Christ has in store for his church when the sin of its dividedness is overcome and forgiven.

But the humility implied in our trusting God for the outcome must not be allowed to inhibit some broad conceptualization of the end toward which we strive. It is humanly impossible to pursue any ends at all unless we have some concept of them. However indefinite this concept may be, it determines the means by which we undertake to realize it. So, in pursuit of Christian unity we have no ground upon which to act unless we are able in some degree to conceptualize the goal. This will not provide us with a visualized picture of the lineaments of the One church, but it will stand in such contrast with our divided churches that we shall be able to do our



human part, under God, in bringing the true church into empirical visibility. What, then, may we say, without presumption, in anticipation of the emergence of the One church?

First, the One church will repossess the organs and functions of which our man-made churches have robbed it. Such a conceptualization of the goal leaves many problems to be solved in the process, the experience, of attaining it. The surmounting of the intervening obstacles will in all probability modify, certainly beyond our present visualization, many features of the goal for which, with God's help, we now strive. But it is unthinkable that the One church can emerge without repossessing the organs and functions whose exercise by autonomous fragments of the church causes and actually constitutes the sin of our dividedness. Eight of these functions have been enumerated in section III above.

Second, we are able without presumption to anticipate the new status our local or parish churches will enjoy when the One church appears. No substantial change in their structure would be required. They would take their place immediately—one could almost say automatically—in the One church. Our local churches are innocent participants in the denominational system. They do not share the sin of our divisions, but are victims of it. Their local polities or structures differ from denomination to denomination only inappreciably, and more in nomenclature than in substance. With the churchism of the denominations abandoned, the great change experienced by the local churches would be the shift of their ecclesiastical orientation from a denominational church to the One ecumenical church. This new orientation will bring psychological and spiritual changes—a higher loyalty, a new increment of dignity, and a broadened vision of the meaning of Christian discipleship which is now denied to every local church by its membership in only a fragment of the One Church of Christ.

The emergence of the One church will surely condemn the absurd and sinful overlapping of local churches which the denominational system has proliferated. But this overlapping and competition will be overcome *after* the denominations cease to be churches, not before. No present local church of evangelical Protestantism will be required to merge with any other local church either as a means to unity or as a necessity of unity. Time and the Spirit of Christ will inevitably bring about much readjustment in the relation of the inordinate number of our local churches when the denominational motivation for their existence is withdrawn. Protestantism probably has more than twice as many local churches as it needs. But the One church when it emerges will gather all these local congregations in

its arms just as they are, and where they are, leaving to the Holy Spirit and the Christian conscience the problem of their adjustment to one another and their distribution in city, town and country.

## VII

Total Protestantism will then present an incomparably more simple structure than it has ever known. How much simpler this structure will be, we can anticipate by looking at our present over-all structure with eyes sharpened by our present interest in Christian unity. The first thing we see is, of course, the scandalous waste of human and material resources in the maintenance of the competitive denominational system. This is too well known to require more than passing mention here. But this scandalous waste and complexity of rival ecclesiasticisms is now compounded by the erection of a federal structure upon the denominational system. The ecclesiastical machinery through which Protestantism operates has become staggering and ominous. Through federation it stands in still greater contrast to the structural simplicity of the One church. This development has not yet received serious attention.

Of the fifty denominations containing ninety-two per cent of America's Protestant membership, each is full panoplied with a complete ecclesiastical structure. Each denomination exercises in schismatic independence all the functions and organs of the One church. Each is organized into presbyteries, synods and national conventions (their differing nomenclature is irrelevant) with a full complement of ecclesiastical officials who administer the work of their denomination through departments and agencies fully staffed with specialists and experts for administration and propaganda. The ecclesiastical bureaucracy of Protestantism must be at least ten times as large as would be required by the One church.

Topping this elaborate denominational structure, we now have nearly one thousand city and state federations culminating in a federation of these same denominations in the National Council of Churches. These federations have their own divisions and departments modeled after those of the denominations themselves. To man them it is necessary to have an ecclesiastical officary and a body of experts and specialists in addition to those of each denomination. All this complicated, awkward and wasteful federal structure is made necessary by the denominational system which created and sustains it.

Thus Protestantism has developed a huge bureaucracy whose ecclesiastical personnel is so numerous that they jostle one another in visiting the

parish churches. Their functioning describes a criss-cross pattern of doing more and more about less and less. These activistic, businesslike "jobs" are largely filled by ministers lured from parish churches who are too easily tempted by their quasi-secular character. The parish ministry is not only drained of many of its most valuable men, but the ideal of the pastoral vocation is lowered by comparison.

What is the ecclesiastical position of this structure as a whole? Specifically, what is its relation to the local churches, on the one hand, and to the One church on the other? Manifestly, *it stands between them*. Thus it not only "obscures" the One church, as the World Council says, but it blocks communication between the One church and its local churches. These local churches are, ecclesilogically speaking, the manifestation of the One church in their particular localities. But the One church cannot manifest itself in its local churches if there exists any illegitimate or extraneous intermediary between itself and them. The denominational and federal structure is such an illegitimate intermediary. The One church cannot mother her own children—her local churches—because multiple stepmothers—our many churches (denominations)—have usurped her place and alienated their loyalty. This whole structure, with its top-heavy bureaucracy, is a man-made structure superimposed upon the local churches. It has no roots in ecclesiological reality—either in the One church or its local churches. It outrages the New Testament and defies the authority of Christ, neither of which knows any other meaning of the word "church" except the One church and its local churches.

In contrast to the massive complexity of this structure, the relative simplicity of the One church stands out. With its emergence this entire overgrown bureaucratic system of denominationalism and federalism would disappear. The way would then be unobstructed for the integration of parish churches with the One church, and for direct communication and mutual responsibility between them. Every local church would be ecumenical.

This is the true ecumenical goal. No other aspect of Christian unity—and there are other aspects—can take precedence over its attainment. But with this goal attained, all other strands in the total pattern of Christian unity—spiritual, missionary, evangelistic, social and much besides—will find their true place. And it may, in God's providence, turn out that with the disappearance of our many churches, our federal structure will prove to have been the scaffolding for the true ecclesiastical structure of the One empirical Church of Christ.



# Unity and Ministry

DAVID C. LUSK

## I

A DISTINGUISHED AMERICAN SCHOLAR, over fifty years ago, produced a book which I have long regarded as the most illuminating study of church history that I have ever read. I refer to *Christian Institutions*, by Dr. A. V. G. Allen of Cambridge, Massachusetts, published in the "International Theological Library." Two aspects of it are of particular interest to all who are tackling ecumenical problems today.

First, the whole layout of the book, which ranges in masterly fashion over all theology and all church history, is in three divisions—Church Order, Doctrine, Worship—the focal points of our present-day debates. Second, with fine penetration Dr. Allen saw in the greater groupings of modern Christendom (especially in the English-speaking world) quite remarkable affinities with the old medieval groupings, both monastic and territorial; indeed the modern groupings are seen as perpetuating today what must be regarded as permanent elements in the life of the church. Further, Dr. Allen saw as the secret of the unity of the medieval Church, not its territorial ministry so much as the papacy—the impersonation (as it were) of Christ, *who is our true center of unity*. If the various medieval orders, he argued, "were one under the headship of the papacy, the Protestant orders" (by which he meant the great denominations) "*are quite as surely one under Christ*, holding to the Catholic faith also, of which the essence is the God-man, a divine-human leader, Jesus the Son of the living God."<sup>1</sup>

That was written toward the end of the nineteenth century. The Faith and Order movement of Bishop Brent and others, and now the whole ecumenical movement, have owed much to such thinking. Yet we have moved beyond 1900. Before then, the story of church unity might not unfairly be divided into two phases: in the earlier, a certain unity was

---

<sup>1</sup> Allen, A. V. G., *Christian Institutions*, Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1897; T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1898, p. 277.

---

THE REV. DAVID C. LUSK, M.A., was formerly minister of St. Columba's Church, Oxford, and of West Coates Church, Edinburgh; he is now retired. The present article is a revision of a paper read before a society of ministers of the Church of Scotland in Edinburgh, Scotland.

virtually compulsory; in the later phase (a surprisingly *short* period, only some two or three centuries) there was, at length, toleration, which meant *liberty, but in separate compartments*. Even then a penetrating mind like Dr. Allen's could recognize the spiritual oneness, and apparently could be content with that. Today we cannot be content with the separate compartments, for our world needs unity as well as liberty. Our problem therefore is to find room, in one harmonious unity, for all those diverse elements which are truly gifts of the Spirit of Christ, but which, as things stand, we too often allow to exclude one another.

This compels us to face the question: In what does the unity of the Church reside? and in particular, Is the unity of the Church dependent on its ministry? For there is little doubt that the 163 churches meeting at Evanston last summer did find themselves at one in great areas of thought, in faith, in hope, and in the Christian "love" which takes responsibility for the world's needs; in evangelism, social order, international and racial problems. It has been impressive and important that they could speak so often with one voice about those things. But it did not make them one Church, not even one "Communion" of churches. More than anything else, today it is the ministry that divides. What can this mean, but that God is calling us to open up, as a public question, the nature of the ministry in its relation to unity?

If ministry is to be in question, so also is the very nature of unity. Canon Leonard Hodgson said in his address at the beginning of the Faith and Order Conference at Lund in 1952: "I wonder whether, in discussing the desired unity of the Church, we do not too easily take for granted that we know quite well what 'unity' means. What if the unity which God wills for His Church be a unity which, like His own unity, we have not yet conceived in our minds?"<sup>2</sup> And he went on to speak of the nature of the Church's unity, as something on which we have still to seek light, as a "wonderful mystery, which God wills to reveal to those who earnestly seek Him."<sup>3</sup> Dr. Hodgson was Secretary to the Faith and Order movement for many years, and he knows, as few others do, the multitudinous questions that arise concerning both Faith and Order the world over. Our familiar unities are closely bound up with familiar forms of ministries. Is it possible that God wills for us today that we realize our unity less by formal ministries than by his mysterious gift which we know as Communion?

<sup>2</sup> *The Ecumenical Review*, Oct., 1952 (Vol. V, No. 1), p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Some of us remember thirty years ago, the days before the First World Conference on Faith and Order met at Lausanne in 1927. Preparatory questionnaires were sent around; little groups used to meet, and we tried to answer questions like "What degree of unity in doctrine would be necessary in a reunited Church?" "What sort of unity in the ministry would be necessary in a reunited Church?" The answer to the latter question usually was "a ministry acceptable to all."

I wonder if that answer went deep enough. It was such a ministry that South India set out to attain, by its patient, constructive building together of the elements which it knew as episcopal, presbyteral, and congregational. Its constructive ideal has been "a ministry acceptable to all": its result, a pioneering achievement of historic importance. Much may still be achieved (if God will) by following this ideal—although future *methods* of attaining it may have to be different. And even then, I think, we shall have to go deeper. North India is said to be finding progress toward church union unexpectedly difficult, not because the North is so very different from the South, but because (we are told) of the limited success of the South Indian experiment.

South Indian union was in 1947. The next year a Lambeth Conference was held. The hopes of India, that the gallant young South Indian Church would be recognized as in full communion with all its mother Churches, were sadly rebuffed. Large parts of the ministry and membership of the new-formed Church were, and still are, declared to be out of communion with the Anglican Churches. North India determined that a repetition of South India would never do. A distinguished Scottish missionary, who has been living with the problem in North India for years, declares that "another South India would split the Anglican Church." North India is therefore aiming at something which might "unify the ministry," might do it now, not just after thirty years (as in South India). What that something can be is strangely hard to find. Not reordination, nor "supplementary ordination;" but something which may "transcend ordination"—some act of God? It doth not yet appear what that can be.

At this rate, along the line of "ministry acceptable to all," the cause of Christian unity may take centuries to reach its urgent aims. We are forced to ask whether such a ministry is really God's chosen means for the restoring of the unity of his great design. *For if the unity of the Church consists in something other than the ministry, it cannot be realized through the ministry alone.*

I venture to suggest (1) that *unity* cannot depend on ministry but is in CHRIST, and history bears this out; and (2) that the most fitting *expression* of the Church's unity may be, for our day at least, in the Sacraments.

## II

Unity *cannot depend on* ministry. It does not in the New Testament. Nor did it, I believe, in the medieval Church of the West, when unity most *appeared* to depend on the ministry; for I take the idea of the "Vicar of Christ" to be not "ministry" in the ordinary sense, not an "order." It is a distinct theological idea. Neither does unity depend on ministry today, nor can it tomorrow.

(1) *It did not depend upon ministry in the New Testament.* It is of course abundantly clear that the first Christians "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship," "and great grace was upon them all" (Acts 2:42, 4:33, RSV). Unity with the apostles might seem at first the very essence of the Church's unity. And as the Church grew, elders appeared alongside the apostles, to deal with the divisive questions; "elders in every church" (Acts 14:23), at least in certain areas, were appointed. Paul and the others, as apostles, spent and were spent in the pastoral care of the churches. "Apostleship" is first in the lists of good gifts of God to his churches (1 Cor. 12:28, Eph. 4:11). But the unity of the Church was not *in the apostles*. Indeed, when apostles were thought much of in Corinth, the effect was not unity but division! "I am of Paul. I of Apollos. I of Peter!" (1 Cor. 1:12).

So we have those majestic passages, in which St. Paul tells the mystery of Christian unity; Christ the Head of the Living Body, with its wealth of diversity, in character and in functions, throughout the members; and the health of the Body in the vital relation of every part to the Head. "Holding fast to the Head" (Col. 2:19, RSV), "from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God." Paul's principle of unity is relation to Christ.

Turn to the Fourth Gospel. What is the unity in the mind of the Master himself? "The glory that thou hast given me, I in turn *have given* it [perfect tense] to them; that they may be a unity even as we are a unity, I in them and thou in me; so that they *may be perfected into a unity*; so that the world may know that thou didst send me" (John 17:22-23).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> My own translation from the Greek.

The glory of divine unity I (for my part) *have given* unto them. —That unity, *given*, inescapable, is what is disturbing the sundered Churches today; disturbing, because present, but not yet "perfected."

How the apostles handed on their "care of all the churches" to those who followed them, is only partly clear. The Corinthians were what we should call a very "young" church. They were still under Paul's own supervision, though he was absent (cf. Chap. 5). From this there was development to later days, when submission to local office-bearers could be urged. 1 Corinthians 16:15f is very revealing. "You know the household of Stephanas, first fruits of Achaia, how they *set themselves* to be servants to the saints,—I beseech you that you submit yourselves to people like that, and to everyone who co-operates and works hard."<sup>5</sup> That is the gradual and truly Christian growth of the spirit which Christ so often inculcated: "Who will be chief must be your servant" (Mark 9:35 and parallels.) To this day, we are in constant danger of soiling our souls with the ancient question, "Who is the greater?" *presbyter*, *episcopus*, or who? There in Corinth was a working out of the Master's first charge of *diakonia*, and the natural growth of a competent, shepherding *episcopus*, with natural, or appointed, elders.

Dr. Olof Linton, in his book, *Das Problem der Urkirche*<sup>6</sup> sees the young church as not a democracy but a "graded unity" (*abgestufte Totalität*); neither ruled by their office-bearers nor by democratic majorities; but keeping together in a unity, allowing themselves to be guided by their leaders, and taking decisions together. He sees this in Acts 15, and sees it as "Oriental," not Greek.

Clement of Rome (A.D. 95) bears out the idea that government in the Church was by persuasion, by the Spirit of Christ, by willing subordination and if need be by self-effacement, *not* by a legal system laid down by apostles. Even Ignatius of Antioch, twenty years later, eager to commend the threefold system of bishop, presbyters, deacons, and intensely anxious about unity, made this typical statement: "I pray (for the churches) that there may be unity both bodily and spiritual, the unity of Jesus Christ, our constant life; of faith and love; and, more important than all, oneness in Jesus and the Father" (Magn. I).<sup>7</sup> Lightfoot's note on the last phrase is, "the personal center in which the unity resides, *Jesus and Father*."

<sup>5</sup> My own translation.

<sup>6</sup> Uppsala, 1932.

<sup>7</sup> Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, Macmillan & Co., 1889, Pt. 2, Vol. 2, p. 109, n. 2.



Ignatius is regularly quoted by superficial legalists. Even Bishop Gore wrote, "The ministry was the center of unity. Rally round your officers! was the cry, alike of Ignatius, of Clement, and of their successors."<sup>8</sup> That is only the surface truth. Properly read, Ignatius is seen to be at heart Johannine. He takes us back to the unity of our Master's prayer, in John's great seventeenth chapter. The Christian ministry, teaching, caring, serving in Word and Sacraments, is one of God's greatest gifts to his Church, and should be a principal means to the preserving of unity. It is a first duty of the shepherd to keep together his flock. Yet they are his Master's flock, not his. "Feed my sheep," said Christ to Peter (John 21:17); and Peter to the presbyters says, "Feed the flock of God, which is among you" (1 Pet. 5:2, AV). The unity of the Church, in the New Testament and the earliest Apostolic Fathers, is not in man. It is in God.

(2) *The secret of unity in the Middle Ages was not in the local ministry.* Let us take two quick glances into the thirteenth century.

(a) In the year 1209, Innocent III was Pope. In him worldly power beyond that of the Caesars was concentrated to an unheard-of degree. Kings were his vassals from Hungary to Portugal; and soon King John of England would be one more. Armies of the West had taken Constantinople, and set up a Latin kingdom there. Even the Patriarchate there had, for the time being, become subject to Rome. All this was from the slow accumulation of power, over centuries, in the hands of one now declared "Christ's Vicar on earth." Often the power had been used for righteousness, to discipline barbarous or evil princes. But it had somehow produced that haunting thing which had once appeared in a vision to Christ himself as a real Temptation—"the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them"—given now into the hand of him who bore Christ's name.

In that year 1209, a strange young man from Assisi found his way into the presence of the Lord Pope, and asked for his blessing on a plan he and his friends had, to live without *any* possessions and to go about preaching repentance. The pope looked at him, and told him to go and roll himself among the pigs. That night the high Pontiff dreamed that he saw the whole fabric of the Church ready to fall, and the strange young man from Assisi holding it up. Next day this irregular young lay preacher of repentance, who refused to join any of the existing monastic orders, was given the blessing of the uneasy Pope, to go and try what he could do *in his own way*. So began the Franciscans, the Grey Friars.

<sup>8</sup> Gore, Charles, *Orders and Unity*, London, John Murray, 1909, p. 145.

(It has been said of John and Charles Wesley, that when they went out, as young men, to America, they were eager to serve and there was plenty to be done. Any ordinary men would have had success. But they failed. For they had genius; they had to find and do their lifework *in their own way*.)

The point is that the territorial system of ministry in diocese and parish, the ordered framework of medieval Christendom, was never by itself sufficient for all the diversities of the divine gifts which God gave to his Church. The monastic movements, and later the Friars, could not be contained within the system. It was (as I see it) the genius of the Papacy to make them virtually independent of the territorial system, so long as they were loyal to Christ's Vicar. For in that idea—the personal "Vicar of Christ"—the Papacy could count on attracting to itself some at least of the devotion which every Christian naturally offers to his Lord. The papal system had grasped the New Testament truth, that the unity of the Church is not in its regular territorial ministry of bishop and elder, however needful this is for its daily life, but in Christ himself. That is to say, the medieval principle of unity was the right one. But its application? Sometimes it seemed to mean the very kingdom of God on earth, sometimes blasphemy.

Thomas Hobbes thought to discredit the Papacy by his famous epigram, "the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire sitting crowned upon the grave thereof."<sup>9</sup> Partly true, no doubt. But the Middle Ages did not see the Papacy so. They saw in it not Caesar but Christ. They clung to that vision, through desperate disappointments. And some Romanists say today that the Papacy's surviving of its countless degradations may be seen as evidence of its divine origin!

(b) Here is a second picture from the thirteenth century. In 1250, at Lyons in France, Pope Innocent IV was meeting with his court. A preacher of righteousness was there from England, Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, whose whole life was given to caring for his flock and to reforming the abuses of the Church. He appealed to the Pope and his court:

This most holy See is the throne of God and the sun of the world, without which sun the world would perish. Those who preside over this most holy See are pre-eminent among mortals in being clothed with the person of Christ. [Note, not "Peter," but "Christ."] Obedience is due to them as to Him—in so far as they are true

<sup>9</sup> Hobbes, T., *Leviathan*, 1651, pt. 4, chap. 47.

presidents. —But if one of them (which God forbid) put on the garment of love of kindred, or of the world, or of aught else but Christ, and thus act against His precepts, he who obeys such a one manifestly separates himself from Christ and from His Body which is the Church, and from the true presidency of this See; and if the whole world obeys such a one, then hath come the falling away, and the Son of Perdition is at hand. God forbid that this most holy See should be the cause of falling away, or of schism among those who are one with God.<sup>10</sup>

Think of the power of that great ideal, and of the truly spiritual way it is interpreted here. All nations and their rulers at the feet of Christ; the daily life of home and of market "interpenetrated with religion" (to use the words of a great teacher).<sup>11</sup> Christ, in his Vicar, the center: and *in all things*, as we know Christ should be. That unifying, one-man control had been a beacon of light in the tumultuous Dark Ages. Then those who clung so long to the great medieval ideal were slowly and painfully driven to ask whether, after all, Christ's Vicar could be doing the devil's work. But in the darkness which is over the nations today, that same form of unity is again attracting many. Have *we* a truer application to offer, of that right principle, that unity is in Christ? Dr. A. V. G. Allen, in his day, could see our churches as "quite as surely one under Christ." But our world today requires that the truth of this be made more manifest.

(3) We come now to *the present day*. What makes our ways of thinking so different from those of much of the past? It is largely that we are less dependent on deductive thinking, and make more use of observation and induction. In church life, since Christian toleration has now *had time to show its fruits*, we are able to observe much truth relevant to church order that was necessarily hidden from our fathers. It is difficult for us to realize that we have to deal now with material for church history that is available for the first time. For who can deny that there has been a long enough time for all of us to see "fruits of the Spirit" in communities whose order may never (so far as we can see) be blended with our own?

No doubt we are all disposed to repeat, even today, those venerable general principles of church government (Romanist, Eastern, Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican . . .) which have been deduced from Scripture and tradition; still trying to persuade each other that our old ways are best. Our first concern in friendly get-togethers is, usually, to see that our own traditions are not left out, but are duly woven into the combined pattern of the Church-to-be. Well and good. There is still room and need for advance in this way. But we must also be preparing for something greater.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, A. L., *Church and State in the Middle Ages*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1913, Lect. 3, pp. 123 f.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

Even where we fail to build a composite church order, acceptable to others, we must be prepared to acknowledge, and somehow to practice, Christian oneness with those outside.

We have long since learned that the secret of unity cannot be that one-man authority of the Middle Ages; that Christ does not need a "Vicar," as though he were absent; that he cannot have "one Vicar," for by his Spirit he is present with all faithful people. What then is our truer application of that right principle that unity is in Christ? Surely it is *the recognizing of the Spirit of Christ wherever he is at work*. The apostolic rule, "Try the spirits, whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1, AV), is still valid, even if by no means easy to carry out.

It is true that the toleration of our modern era has left some obviously deplorable tares to grow, and extravagances such as Monsignor Ronald A. Knox has collected into his fascinating book, *Enthusiasm*.<sup>12</sup> Yet Christian toleration has yielded richer varieties of good seed than could ever have been looked for by our fathers. God has evidently more ministries than they have allowed for. I remember my own surprise when first I realized that Congregationalists, with no common standards of doctrine, had through many generations maintained a remarkably steady and orthodox body of belief. To quote again Dr. Leonard Hodgson:

I have sometimes wondered whether there might not be a place in a united church, for both Catholic sacramentalism and Quaker religion. Sacraments are means to an end. The end is communion with God. May it not be, that God wills to have within His sacramental church, men and women with special vocation to a religious order whose function is to bear witness to the truth, that God is not tied to His Sacraments? Is it possible that, in this period of our division, He has been calling and training the Society of Friends, to prepare them to fulfill that function in His united Church?<sup>13</sup>

It is not easy to picture the shape of things in that Church; but I take Dr. Hodgson's questions to indicate, that at the heart of the modern ecumenical movement there is the perception (I trust, the growing perception) that Christ's presence, and not an order or orders of ministry, "constitutes" the Church, and *gives* it unity; and that there ought to be room in it, as outwardly organized, for all in whom Christ's Spirit is plainly to be seen. Long ago, in the case of Cornelius in Acts 11, it was the perception of Christ's Spirit that opened the young Christian Church to believing Gentiles, and that later, in Acts 15, determined the proper treatment of

<sup>12</sup> Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1950.

<sup>13</sup> *Ecumenical Review*, op. cit., pp. 9, 10.

them. We need today to exercise a like alertness to the acts of God that are before our eyes. The present is part of history as truly as the past. And if history is to be used (as it is being used) to guide our present-day action, it must comprehend the present, must see the acts of God for what they are. Otherwise history, as everyone who loves it knows, can be a most dangerous guide. Do we not see that the observable acts of God, in the past three hundred years, bear out the teachings of both the New Testament and later church history that Christian unity is to be found in Christ rather than in the ministry? Loyalty to Christ is today, as in the Middle Ages, the only universal bond of unity; and it is the recognizing of his presence, in our various communities, that holds us together.

### III

But how can such unity find its most fitting expression? The Faith and Order Commission has today declared in its Constitution, that the Commission's first function is "to proclaim the essential oneness of the Church of Christ, and to keep before the Churches the obligation to manifest that unity." If the unity of the Church is in Christ, and if loyalty to him is (and may perhaps remain) the only universal bond of unity, how can this mysterious but real thing be expressed? We should remember that spiritual reality, far from being (as we so easily think) something subjective, even emotional, and therefore elusive, is actually more real and powerful than anything merely human, and is therefore inescapable! What we are here considering is *that intensely real unity*, which is inescapably embodied in all who are Christ's. As I see it, the most fitting expression of this is at the Lord's Table. A spiritual unity demands a spiritual expression. As far as can be seen, for our day at least, intercommunion may be its very best expression. Administrative unities must be local. *Universal unity*—what can it be but a Communion?

What outward shape the future reunited Church may find is beyond our sight. We are to believe that God's diverse gifts can never be incongruous. Rather they are intended for the completing of God's unfolding design. St. Paul has an encouraging word for this, in Ephesians 4:12, "the perfecting of the saints." The word *kataartismos* means "articulating together." It was used of a surgeon setting a dislocated joint. In the New Testament it has varied uses, from mending fishing nets (Matt. 4:21) to fitting together the whole universe (Heb. 11:3). As St. Paul uses it of the Church, it suggests a divine pattern and purpose—the fitting together



of things which by their very nature *have been formed differently in order to be fitted into one another*. Can we rise to this belief about our differences? that all God's gifts, when truly understood, are meant to fit into his grand design? In Chalcedonian language, there need neither be "confusion" (which today we fear) nor "separation" (which today we suffer from).

For the immediate present, it is of the utmost practical importance that administrative, incorporating unions should in many places be achieved by the harmonizing, or the unifying, of existing ministries, if only for simple cooperation; for our scanty forces are often ill deployed. But it is difficult not to foresee cases in which anything like "a ministry acceptable to all" must be a long way off—for example, with the Quakers. Good Christian people may continue to group themselves variously (not always unworthily) for their various needs. After all, our hands and our feet belong to one body and share one life and should have a care for one another; but their requirements are very different. There must be freedom to differ as widely as the creative Spirit of Christ requires—and yet unity. *Our unity in Christ is, by its nature, a divine mystery*; and if the sign of our unity is to correspond to the nature of the unity, must it not find its most fitting expression in a mystery, the *sacramental* mystery of our union with Christ?

To St. Paul there is an almost inextricable connection between the Body of Christ in his sacrament and the Body of Christ which is his Church. "For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17, AV). St. Paul argues from the fact of the "one bread" to the thought of the "one Body," the Church. We today are learning afresh to apprehend the "one Body," the Church; and we are asking for "one bread." Someone may say, "But Quakers (to take the extreme case) and those nineteenth-century Franciscans, the Salvation Army, decline the sacraments." True, as things stand; but it might be otherwise if our sacraments were always clearly open to them. Be that as it may, there should be no debarring from his sacraments of any who belong to Christ.

Anglicans are right who see a close connection between the Church which is Christ's Body and the holy bread. The connection is Christ, not a minister. May God bring them and others to define the Body, the Church, with reference to the living Head—not by any subordinate ministry, a position neither scriptural nor well founded in history; so that we all may

pray together in our holiest moments, and may partake together of the "one bread." It is not variety of opinions and customs that obscures Christ from the world, so much as does apparent absence of Christian love to one another in our exclusive groupings. And is it not broadly true that those who began our divisions never meant them to be lasting? Did not John Hus and Luther and Calvin and all the rest appeal to the first free reforming council or assembly? Dissent, among honest Christians, should not for long mean separation, with its unnatural hardening.

An important work has recently been published, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*.<sup>14</sup> It begins at 1517, and indeed earlier! Is it not alarming to realize that there has never been a time when there were not many thoughtful consciences disturbed by existing divisions, and seeking to heal them? Yet how great is the unfinished task! We can be thankful that now "for the first time the Churches as such, publicly and officially, have accepted responsibility for the promotion of the cause of Christian unity." Thank God. And yet!

Happily we need not always wait for administrative unions. We can, and we must, *practice* unity. How happy was the letter sent by the Bishop of Oslo, on behalf of the Church of Norway, to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in May, 1954: "We feel it completely natural to cultivate practical intercommunion." If any of us should think that near neighbors are rather apt to be more difficult than those far away, may it not be partly that we need to teach our people to "cultivate" more our Christian neighbors? "All things are yours; Paul or Apollos or Cephas" (1 Cor. 3:21). Paul knew he was different from Apollos, and from Peter; and it was not the preferring of one to another that was bad, but any excluding of one another. We pray for unity; but how many of us make a habit of worshiping, every now and again, in a quite different Church? As a matter of Christian duty, a witness to the truth of the Body of Christ?

The late Dr. James Cooper, Regius Professor of Church History at Glasgow—that most careful of churchmen—when he was a minister in Aberdeen, was distressed to hear that a young woman of his flock proposed to go out to China as a missionary, in the China Inland Mission. He went to see her, full of "correct" ideas of the Church, and to persuade her to some better course. He came back, and simply said, "I could do nothing. God had spoken to her." Every minister knows such cases. God is at work beyond our reach.

<sup>14</sup> Rouse, Ruth, and Neill, S. C.; S. P. C. K. (London) and The Westminster Press, 1954.

I wonder if it might be a good practice to train our people (some of the best of them) to use a day, perhaps Whitsunday, to go and worship in a church of another denomination. What pain and disgrace our Christian lands have suffered, from apparently devout persons who have said, "I could never be seen crossing the doorstep of that other church." There may not be many in the cities now who speak like that; perhaps in the United States there are none? But there are many of us everywhere who act as though we thought that way.

The Body of Christ has complexities more wonderful than we know; but it is not, in His plan, disorderly. It is full of vital variety. The household of God has room for many families. A great Parish Church and a little Gospel Hall, Plymouth Brethren or Salvation Army. They may, so far as we can see, continue so for many a day. If only they would, together, break the bread! Would they not *be*—and know themselves to be—"one Body"? It is as we come together in the Spirit of Christ, our living Head, that the divine pattern *forms itself*: "bone to his bone" as in Ezekiel's vision. That is surely one of the fresh insights of the Church of South India. Knowing this, may we everywhere "grow together," losing nothing that any of us have from God, to become "perfected into his unity."

How visible does God require the unity of his Church to be, if the world is to believe on the Christ whom he has sent? The visibility of the Church cannot be merely on the levels of the world's standards of form or law. It must be, like the visibility of God in Christ, something revealed, and therefore itself revealing. A unity which, amid all diversity, reveals to men the secret of the unity of God himself; the love of God. "That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:23, AV).

## Religion Among the Novelists

JOHN J. BUNTING, JR.

"OTHER SHEEP I HAVE, which are not of this fold. . ."

These words of the Master have pointed pertinence for a vast body of material rich in religious suggestiveness which is usually neglected and often maligned in Christian circles: namely, the writings of our leading twentieth-century novelists.

Neglect has been easy and rebuke quick because of the surface features in the typical twentieth-century novel. There have been objections to the preoccupation with sex, the frequent use of objectionable four-letter words, the parading of murders and other crimes across the pages of our best known novels. In some cases these objections have had merit; in others they have not. For the most part they have missed the more important underlying issue; namely, the basic philosophy of life which a particular novel may convey.

It is T. S. Eliot who says: "Whether there is such a thing as a harmless book I am not sure: but there very likely are books so utterly unreadable as to be incapable of injuring anybody. But it is certain that a book is not harmless merely because no one is consciously offended by it."<sup>1</sup> And conversely, the scenes portrayed by our novelists (which must often be as they are in order to be factual) are not nearly so crucial in their effect upon the life of the reader as the fashion in which the characters of those scenes are portrayed and the outlook on those characters is offered.

Three critical writers may be cited as substantiating the claim that modern fiction deserves a "second look" in terms of what it offers in human insight and, although often by negative means, in confirmation of the Christian viewpoint. Harold C. Gardiner, Roman Catholic literary critic, declares that "underneath Hemingway's bullfighters, Fitzgerald's Jazz Age babies, Marquand's bank clerks, is still man with his meaning, and the critic who knows that meaning will better judge the novel and the novelist."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eliot, T. S., "Religion and Literature," in his *Essays Ancient and Modern*, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1936.

<sup>2</sup> Gardiner, H. C., "A Christian Appraisal," in *Fifty Years of the American Novel: 1900-1950* (ed. by H. C. Gardiner), Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1951, p. 7.

---

JOHN J. BUNTING, JR., B.D., Ph.D., is Minister of the Newark Methodist Church, Newark, Delaware, and Director of the Wesley Foundation at the University of Delaware. He invites us to take a "second look" at twentieth-century fiction.

Stanley R. Hopper in the Foreword to *Spiritual Problems in Contemporary Literature* goes further to say that our modern body of literature is "the richest mine of confessional experience and spiritual exploration as exemplified in literature, available since the Renaissance."<sup>3</sup> And Amos N. Wilder strengthens the case by adding that "the custody and future of the Christian tradition has to a considerable degree passed over into the keeping of non-ecclesiastical and even secular groups."<sup>4</sup>

These are highly significant statements. They deserve wider attention. They lead us to ask: What do the fictional giants of our century, and especially of our own nation, have to say—directly or by implication—concerning the central beliefs to which the Christian subscribes?

### I. GOD—THE GREAT ABSENTEE

What do the novelists say about God? God for most of them is "The Great Absentee." Any references to religion or the church are usually incidental or derogatory; the portrayal of the clergyman is often uncomplimentary; and the relevance of religion to man's dilemma seems on first reading to be ignored.

Yet to say this is not to close the case at all. More careful examination reveals in several instances that religious thought is introduced at strategic points in the story—even though briefly. This often happens when the writer seems to have nowhere else to turn and so remembers the fact of deity, and allows God his brief moment upon the stage. There is no lengthy examination of God's pertinence to the dilemma, but the fact of his existence is at least given recognition.

The writings of John Marquand illustrate this principle well. In two of his best known novels, *So Little Time* and *Point of No Return*, God seems to stand patiently in the wings waiting to be summoned. He is ushered in for a brief curtain call in *So Little Time*, Marquand's story of life between the wars, as the hero Jeffrey Wilson, having said good-by to his soldier son and pondering the effect of World War II upon his world, steals into St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City to hear again, as he had long ago, the words of the Lord's Prayer.

But with this the story ends. The key of God is placed beside the lock of life but only as a final and fitting gesture. There is no suggestion that the key be placed within the lock or that Jeffrey Wilson return to the

<sup>3</sup> Hopper, S. R., "Foreword," in *Spiritual Problems in Contemporary Literature* (ed. by S. R. Hopper), Harper & Brothers, 1953, p. xi.

<sup>4</sup> Wilder, A. N., *Modern Poetry and the Christian Tradition*, Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1952, p. xii.



Cathedral for another visit or further investigation. The Cathedral is a kind of lovely old charm piece touched gently and then forgotten. The words of the Master's prayer are only classic words from a man's boyhood recited again with nostalgia but not applied to quench the soul's thirst or to help meet the world's need.

In *Point of No Return* the divine Absentee does not merit even a curtain call, but his absence is painfully felt. As the subtitle of *So Little Time* might be "Modern Man in Search of a Soul," that of *Point of No Return* might well be "Modern Man in Search of a Promotion"; for in this second novel Charlie Gray, returned from the wars, and longing desperately for a vice-presidency in the Stuyvesant Bank, receives it, and with that attainment the novel closes—not in a Cathedral but in the boss's home. Yet the haunting thought of frustration weighs heavily upon him.

Tony's voice seemed to come from a long way off. There was a weight on Charles again, the same old weight, and it was heavier after that brief moment of freedom. In spite of all those years, in spite of all his striving, it was remarkable how little pleasure he took in final fulfillment. He was a vice-president of the Stuyvesant Bank. It was what he had dreamed of long ago and yet it was not the true texture of early dreams. The whole thing was contrived, as he had said to Nancy, an inevitable result, a strangely hollow climax. It had obviously been written in the stars, bound to happen, and he could not have changed a line of it, being what he was, and Nancy would be pleased, but it was not what he had dreamed.<sup>5</sup>

At a new economic and social level Charlie Gray is still aware that the promotion and its accouterments do not take the place of an inner spiritual life. The Cathedral which Jeffrey Wilson found, at least for a moment, stands in sharp contrast to the spiritual husks which Charlie Gray at last knows he has lived with for some time.

This kind of mood, bearing witness to the emptiness of life without God, is repeated many times in twentieth-century fiction. One senses it poignantly in the writings of F. Scott Fitzgerald, which illustrate so well what Henry James called "the failure of fastidiousness." It is apparent in Hemingway, who like Marquand draws upon Ecclesiastes, the most pessimistic book in the Bible, and whose hero in *A Farewell to Arms*, mourning his lover and still-born child, cries out within the vacuum of his disillusioned soul, "There isn't any me any more."<sup>6</sup> It comes with harsh overtones in the writings of war novelists like James Jones and Norman Mailer, whose psychopathic officers and downtrodden privates are "a bunch of dispossessed," as Mailer calls them, locked in sadistic struggle

<sup>5</sup> Marquand, John, *Point of No Return*, Little, Brown & Company, 1949, p. 557.

<sup>6</sup> Hemingway, Ernest, *A Farewell to Arms*, Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1929, p. 113.

with one another, because they are sheep without a spiritual shepherd, and thus utterly lost.

Disillusionment *without God*—again and again this is the theme. It is never explicitly stated and seldom consciously implied; but one catches it in clear and haunting tones. As Hopper says, the work of the creative artist is “frequently a *negative* disclosure of the nature of human need, bearing witness to the *absence* rather than the presence of God.”<sup>7</sup>

## II. MAN—TRUNCATED DIGNITY

If the modern novelist is alone without God and not very much at home with him, he is very much at home with man. To survey the portrayal of man by several representative novelists of our time is to provide a vast body of material ideal for the documentation of any typical theological outline on the subject.

W. Somerset Maugham in *The Moon and Sixpence* tells of Charles Strickland who abruptly leaves his family and his society, living for the rest of his life in a state of immortality and irresponsibility upon a Pacific isle. In a review of this novel Maxwell Anderson is driven to say: “Human nature is, at bottom, never any better than Strickland, and frequently far worse, from a moralist’s point of view.”<sup>8</sup>

William Faulkner in *Light in August* has as his hero Joe Christmas, a Negro who is Miss Burden’s overseer by day, engages in sexual orgies with her by night, and finally becomes her murderer. Norman Mailer’s General Cunningham in *The Naked and the Dead* with psychopathic cruelty breaks the men beneath him.

From the long list of other novelists who might be cited as portraying man at his worst, Robert Penn Warren excels not only in his portrayal but also in the theological orientation which accompanies it. The following quotations are typical, both for their insight and picturesque style:

Man is conceived in sin and born in corruption and he passeth from the stink of the didie to the stench of the shroud.<sup>9</sup>

A conversation between Willie Stark and Jack Burden:

“I never did ask you to frame anybody. And you know why?”

“No.”

“Because it ain’t never necessary. You don’t ever have to frame anybody, because the truth is always sufficient.”

“You sure take a high view of human nature,” I said.

<sup>7</sup> Hopper, *op. cit.*, p. xi.

<sup>8</sup> Anderson, Maxwell, “In Vishnu-Land What Avatar?” *Dial*, November 29, 1919, p. 478.

<sup>9</sup> Warren, R. P., *All the King’s Men*, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1946, p. 203.

"Boy," he said, "I went to a Presbyterian Sunday School back in the days when they still had some theology, and that much of it stuck. And—" he grinned suddenly—"I have found it very valuable."<sup>10</sup>

"It is over. It is all over but the dying, which will yet go on. Though the boil has come to a head and has burst, yet must the pus flow. Men shall come together yet and die in the common guilt of man and in the guilt that sent them hither from far places and distant firesides. . . ."<sup>11</sup>

The point hardly needs to be labored that twentieth-century fiction presents man at his worst. But what we find here is not contradiction but confirmation of the Christian position. We believe that man without God does deteriorate and is finally destroyed. The absentee God produces the abject man. And although not intentionally, modern fiction tells this story again and again.

Yet while man is portrayed as lowly and sinful, his innate dignity is not completely sacrificed. The picture of man is rather one of truncated dignity. In the midst of scenes typical of twentieth-century fiction, such as Steinbeck's *Tobacco Road*, Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, Hemingway's bullfighters and wharf rats, and James Jones' buck privates and stockade prisoners, man is beaten down, oppressed, and treated as of little consequence by his fellows, but still he grimly clings to a certain basic dignity.

In the novel *To Have and To Have Not* Hemingway portrays the lot of the "Have-nots." While the rich loll on their yachts, the poor (in this case the "wharf rats," some of whom are engaged in smuggling Chinese into the United States) think their thoughts. This is the thought of one:

Because we are the desperate ones. . . . The ones with nothing to lose. We are the completely brutalized ones. We're worse than the stuff the original Spartacus worked with. But it's tough to try to do anything with us because we have been beaten so far that the only solace is booze and the only pride is in being able to take it. But we're not all like that. There are some of us that are going to hand it out.<sup>12</sup>

Growing out of this sense of dignity is a note of compassion and pity which has been one of the recurring themes of twentieth-century fiction. It is at this point that Van Wyck Brooks crosses swords with Paul Elmer More. In answer to More's comment that Dreiser's characters were merely animals, he replies as follows:

Were animals ever compassionate, did they care for justice violently, as Dreiser cared, and sometimes Eugene O'Neill? Did they ever contend for a decent world as Dreiser himself contended for it, or Erskine Caldwell, for that matter, in his

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 358.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>12</sup> Hemingway, Ernest, *To Have and To Have Not*, Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1937, p. 206.

sociological studies? Or Faulkner in his way, in *Intruder in the Dust*? Behind virtually all the "pitiful creatures that people contemporary fiction"—a phrase of Krutch that remained appropriate for years—one discerned an indictment of the world that had made them, on the part of their creators, that was bound up with a desire for their welfare and growth. As Thomas Wolfe said, "The essence of all faith for people of my belief is that man's life can be, and will be, better," and this was as true of Dos Passos and Steinbeck, of Hemingway and Farrell, as it was of Carl Sandburg or Lindsay or Sinclair Lewis. All were concerned in some fashion, as Faulkner was also concerned, with the fate of "the little man," for whom Jefferson and Lincoln had shared an affection with so many American writers, the little man who was the big man, potentially, and who was still seeking for what Thomas Paine called his proper rank."<sup>13</sup>

Reaching all the way from Dreiser to James Jones is this strain of pity and compassion toward the underdog. A generation after Dreiser, Jones takes the same basic characters, puts them in khaki, locates them at Pearl Harbor, and rehearses the same theme. In the following passage he presents the scene at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii as Taps are sounded:

The notes rose high in the air and hung above the quadrangle. They vibrated there, caressingly, filled with an infinite sadness, an endless patience, a pointless pride, the requiem and epitaph of the common soldier, who smelled like a common soldier, as a woman once had told him. They hovered like halos over the heads of the sleeping men in the darkened barracks, turning all grossness to the beauty that is the beauty of sympathy and understanding. Here we are, they said, you made us, now see us, don't close your eyes and shudder at it; this beauty, and this sorrow, of things as they are. This is the true song, the song of the ruck, not of battle heroes; the song of the Stockade prisoners itchy stinking, sweating under coats of grey rock dust; the song of the mucky KP's, of the men without women . . . who come to scour the Officers' Club—after the parties are over. This is the song of the scum, the Aqua-Velva drinkers, the shameless ones who greedily drain the half filled glasses, some of them lipstick-smeared, that the party-ers can afford to leave unfinished.<sup>14</sup>

### III. CHRIST—REMOTE REDEEMER

If God is Absentee for the modern American novelist, Christ is remote. And it cannot be reported that redemption is easily provided for, nor is the connection between Christ and redemption made as automatically by the writer as by the worshiper.

But all is not dark. There are chinks of light. Whence do they come?

They first come from the spirit of compassion referred to in the section above. This is the point at which several of our novelists move (or at least try to move) from rejection to redemption, from defeat to decisive action.

Hemingway is a good example. His tribute to the truncated dignity of man attempts to rise above the level of merely being true in a stoical

<sup>13</sup> Brooks, Van Wyck, *The Confident Years: 1885-1915*, E. P. Dutton & Co., 1952, p. 607.

<sup>14</sup> Jones, James, *From Here to Eternity*, Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1951, p. 219.

and blind sense to any kind of code, good or bad, in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. The title of the book comes from the famous passage by John Donne:

No man is an Iland, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the maine: if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe is the lesse, as well as if a Promontorie were, as well as if a Mannor of thy friends or of thine owne were; any mans death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde: And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee.

And in these words is a ray of hope that a new Hemingway has evolved—one who will portray men not only true to a code, but true to a code worth their loyalty; not stoical in their bitterness toward the world, but displaying forbearance because they have found an idealism which inspires them.

And there is in this great book by Hemingway a difference. The realist allows the light of idealism to shimmer for a few moments upon his gloom-edged pages. He sees in the Spanish Loyalist fight against the Fascists hope for the world, and his hero Robert Jordan prepares to give his life for the sake of others. Even his usual concept of womanhood—that of complete subjection, as with Catherine in *A Farewell to Arms*—is changed. Catherine had isolated Lieutenant Henry with her love; Maria inspires Robert Jordan for the service which he heroically performs.

But the heavy weight of desolation cuts short the projected flight of dignity. The shadows move in upon the temporarily illumined page. The hero still dies. And he dies alone. The nemesis of *A Farewell to Arms* again dominates the scene: "those that will not break it kills." The scenes of violence again prevail, and it is the theme of the old bullfight again—only this time the weapon is not a pic, but a gun; and the victim is not an animal, but a man. The opportunity for realism to include the ideal is missed, and man's dignity, temporarily lifted up, is rudely cast down.

*The Old Man and the Sea*, however, though limited in scope (for it deals only with man and his relationship to nature) confirms the thesis that Hemingway has long sought some type of confirmation for the dignity of man. This new story by the old master provides exactly that. The hero of the story declares, ". . . man is not made for defeat . . . a man can be destroyed but not defeated."<sup>18</sup> The setting is not one of violence but of peacefulness. This is not a bullfight with its noise and blood, but a fishing trip with no noise and little blood. The background is not frustrated unhappiness but happiness: a good town where Santiago had been content with his wife, and where there is now the boy who greatly admires him. The hero is not in a war with nature. Nature cooperates with him: "the

<sup>18</sup> Hemingway, Ernest., *The Old Man and the Sea*, Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1952.



Gulf Stream takes him away . . . the trade winds bring him back." The story is tragic, but its effect is not depression but elevation. And it passes the test of Aristotelian catharsis, because we catch the sense of the old man's oneness with all mankind. This Hemingway attempted to attain in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* with only partial success. Here he is more successful in the effort.

This same principle of redemption through identification with others is suggested by James Jones, as his hero Prewitt refuses to enter the boxing ring again because he has blinded a man while fighting, and as he defends the underdog against the onslaughts of Sergeant, General, and religious bigot. But during the critical bombing of Pearl Harbor the best salvation Prewitt can find is a delicious steak in a house of prostitution—a letdown indeed! Under these circumstances Prewitt's love for the underdog is found very much wanting, and is not equal to the crisis because it lacks moral stamina.

Herein lies the weakness of a mere humanitarian sympathy which lacks the spiritual depth and moral discipline to make it effective. Irving Babbitt writes:

One may recognize innumerable incidental advantages in the gospel of service and yet harbor an uneasy suspicion withal that in the passage from the older religion to the modern humanitarian dispensation something vital has disappeared, something for which neither the outer working of the utilitarian nor again the expansive sympathy of the sentimentalist can offer an equivalent.<sup>16</sup>

William Faulkner, dealing with the tortuous issue of slavery and its effect upon the soul of the South, sees the problem of redemption much more profoundly than his contemporaries. From the outset he places the problem within, laying it at the door of man's soul rather than at the door of social evil.

The typical Faulkner character is at war with himself. He is torn by the emotion of ambivalence as his love for his native heath and its associations struggles with his feeling of guilt for what has taken place. The words of Quentin Compson in *Absalom, Absalom!* as he concludes the story of Sutpen with its terror and evil, remain with a haunting quality. He is asked by his listener, "Why do you hate the South?" "I dont hate it," Quentin said, quickly, at once, immediately; 'I dont hate it,' he said. I dont hate it he thought, panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark; I dont. I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!"<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Babbitt, Irving, "The Critic and American Life," in *On Being Creative and Other Essays*, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1932, pp. 228-229.

<sup>17</sup> Faulkner, William, *Absalom, Absalom!*, Random House, 1951, p. 378.

In *Light in August* Miss Burden tells Joe Christmas, her overseer of mixed birth, of going with her father to the graves of her grandfather and brother, and of his words:

Remember this. Your grandfather and brother are lying there, murdered not by one white man but by the curse which God put on a whole race before your grandfather or your brother or me or you were even thought of. . . . In order to rise, you must raise the shadow with you. But you can never lift it to your level. I see that now, which I did not see until I came down here. But escape it you cannot.<sup>18</sup>

Faulkner's redemption is of the ransom variety, with the mathematical-balance-sheet implications of an Anselm. The white man has cursed the black man; now the black man curses the white man; and the white man must accept that curse as the first step toward his ultimate salvation. This is good Old Testament theology. And it has the ring of cold truth about it.

Faulkner's novel *Requiem for a Nun* presents this twofold theme of retribution and redemption. This is the continued story of Temple Drake and Gowan Stevens, two characters from *Sanctuary*, now married and the parents of two children. Temple decides to bolt the home for Pete, a new passion, but Nancy, a reformed Negro prostitute who is nursemaid in the home, is determined that Temple will not run off. When she begs Temple not to leave and is rebuffed, she strangles the baby in order to forestall the greater tragedy of both children being left homeless.

The note of payment for past sins is sounded by Stevens as follows:

It was as though she realized for the first time that you—everyone—must, or anyway may have to, pay for your past; that past is something like a promissory note with a trick clause in it which, as long as nothing goes wrong, can be manumitted in an orderly manner, but which fate or luck or chance can foreclose on you without warning.<sup>19</sup>

The whole process is given an affirmative quality and is for a moment lifted toward the heights of Isaiah's Suffering Servant in Stevens' words, "The salvation of the world is in man's suffering."<sup>20</sup> Irving Howe suggests that in *Requiem for a Nun* Faulkner implies that ultimate salvation for the white man lies with the Negro. He even says that a specific responsibility of the Negro may prove to be the salvation of the white man.

As noted above, it is Robert Penn Warren who more than any other contemporary American novelist parallels and uses Christian theology in his writings. In his latest book, *Brother to Dragons*, he brings his concept of man's sin and redemption to a new climax.

<sup>18</sup> Faulkner, William, *Light in August*, Random House, 1950, pp. 221-222.

<sup>19</sup> Faulkner, William, *Requiem for a Nun*, Random House, 1950, p. 162.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

The distinctive feature of *Brother to Dragons* is the role played by Thomas Jefferson, as in an imaginative afterlife he questions the optimistic view he had held concerning human nature during his lifetime. He is driven to this question because of a murder committed by two of his nephews, Lilburn and Isham Lewis, sons of Lucy Jefferson Lewis. The victim is a Negro slave. The method is brutal, for it is sheer butchery. And the reason is trivial, for the slave had stolen a pitcher prized by the deceased Mrs. Lewis.

This murder is not fictional, but an actual matter of recorded fact. Students have been able to find no reference by Jefferson to this tragic event in his family, and one has suggested that Jefferson could not bring himself to discuss the appalling episode.

Jefferson is one of the main speakers in the dialogue, and as he is confronted by this monstrous deed committed within his own family he is forced to re-examine his beliefs in the innate goodness of man and to face a more realistic concept of human nature.

Near the beginning of the dialogue Jefferson confesses:

There's no forgiveness for our being human.  
It is the inexpugnable error. It is,  
Dear Sister, the one thing we have overlooked  
In our outrageous dreams and cunningest contrivances.<sup>21</sup>

And on this basis he shifts his historic emphasis from freedom to truth.

In his earlier works Warren is far more interested in presenting the case for sin than in offering the cure of salvation. This is also true of *Brother to Dragons*, but the suggestion of redemption does enter the picture. Lucy Jefferson Lewis declares toward the end of the story, after the dreadful murder has taken its multiple toll of lives, "the dream remains." This represents a forward step by Warren in his movement from degradation to hope.

This dream is one of a thoroughly Christian redemption. It is bought not cheaply but at a high price. Warren's realistic view of man enables him to arrive at this conclusion. Lucy Lewis declares:

The dream remains.  
But my dear Brother, if your dream  
Was noble, there's a nobler yet to dream.  
It will be nobler because more difficult and cold  
In the face of the old cost of the human redemption,  
And knowledge of that cost is, in itself, a kind of redemption.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Warren, R. P., *Brother to Dragons*, Random House, 1953, p. 24.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

The dearth of references to Christ by the novelists discussed in this paper is representative of twentieth-century American fiction. For them he is indeed a remote Redeemer. But although they have not found the Person, the discussion above indicates that they are seeking after, and to a degree have found, some of the principles he embodies.

The realism of twentieth-century fiction, subject to sharp criticism in Christian circles, is therefore really providing the gateway to a greater appreciation of the insights and principles in which the Christian believes. The focus upon the "have-nots" of our society, victims of poverty, war, and their own self-assignation, has become the clue to salvation in terms of compassion and brotherhood. This is illustrated by such writers as Dreiser, Hemingway, and Jones.

And on a deeper level, the frank evaluation of man ("haves" as well as "have-nots") by our Southern novelists, such as Faulkner and Warren, has driven them back upon the insights of Christian theology for their framework of thought and has provided them a more profound basis for the concept of redemption which they offer. Seeing man at his worst, they suggest no cheap redemption, but one bought with a price. In this respect they are thoroughly Christian in the message which they bring.

During the writing of this paper, the long-awaited book *A Fable* by William Faulkner is being released. In it he uses the last week of Christ's life for his analogous framework of time, as he moves now from the problem of the Negro to that of war, and presents vicarious suffering as the way of salvation. For Faulkner apparently the Christ—not only as a principle but also as a Person—is becoming less remote and more real.

#### IV

These "other (literary) sheep which are not of this fold" present a central challenge for the church. They and those who follow them give increasing evidence of asking the right questions. We believe that as a church we have the right answers. Our strategy must therefore be that of meeting the secular question by the religious answer; the pagan cry, "What must I do to be saved?" with the Christian reply (effectively made), "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

Herein lies a field white unto harvest. And this evangelistic opportunity, both literary and spiritual, suggests strongly that our twentieth-century American fiction deserves a "second look."

# The Lay Christian and His Vocation

DWIGHT W. HARWELL

THE GENIUS OF CHRISTIANITY, reasserted in the Protestant reform, is its assertion that by faith, God's gift of grace is available to all. Those who live in faith find *that* grace mediated in the rich and stubborn fabric of daily life and work. They find this to be a sacramental universe in which the spirit of Christ is mediated to each and by each, through God's grace. In spite of modern appearances, this insight is central to Christian thought on vocations, and is as universal in its implications and applications as is the missionary genius of ecumenical Christianity.

## I. THE CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION FOR VOCATION

Anyone who has worked on the assembly line in a factory realizes how alien a Christian doctrine of vocation seems in that setting. Although factory workers of today are usually paid good wages through powerful labor-union intercession, much factory work is still a form of slavery (with pay) in the way it strips a person down to a bare, impersonal, instrumental relationship to a machine. He is battered into dull, routine boredom—meaninglessness. This can be the plight of the office worker as well. Work becomes routinized boredom. This is unsentimental truth. As Henry Nelson Wieman says, in another and vivid way:

If a man could be physically and psychologically forced to do nothing but put one foot successively in front of the other for days at a time he would either commit suicide, become imbecile, or go insane. But if he made exactly the same movements day after day and week after week under the integrating purpose of walking to the place where he could woo the maiden he loved, or under the purpose of scaling Mount Everest, the process might be an inspiring and immensely enriching experience.<sup>1</sup>

This problem is inherent in all work, but is heightened in a complex industrialized society. We must start with a recognition of this fact before the Christian resources can come into living relationship to the reality of

---

<sup>1</sup> Wieman, Henry N., *Methods of Private Religious Living*, The Macmillan Company, 1929, pp. 84-85.

DWIGHT W. HARWELL, M.A., B.D., recently Associate Minister of the Fellowship Church of All Peoples, San Francisco, is now a graduate assistant instructor of philosophy and Christian ethics in Scarritt College and a special student in the Vanderbilt University School of Religion, Nashville, Tennessee. This article was written in the course of his studies at the Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California.



work. The area of crucial concern is not only the whole category of "unskilled" labor, but also the white-collar category<sup>2</sup> (mushrooming into inclusion of *all* work), and the general plight caused by the current technological and "organizational" revolution which follows the industrial revolution.<sup>3</sup> But the plight is heightened dramatically within the "unskilled" labor category. The challenge and test of Christianity is focused and heightened in this area.

A current illustration of this is the plight of the French proletariat:

There exists a clearly distinct *working-class* in France, bound together by the fellowship of manual labor lasting for a whole lifetime.

Its milieu is determined by the *factory*, the world without miracles or mystery. It is at the same time an intensely human world, the fruit of man's will alone, and intensely inhuman, wholly artificial.<sup>4</sup>

The dilemma in France is a crucial illustration of "how alien and separated Christianity and the French proletariat have become."<sup>5</sup> And the "worker priests" there, as Schomer illustrates graphically,<sup>6</sup> in seeking to live their Christian concern and meet this problem, are halted in their organized effort to heal the breach; halted by Roman Catholic hierarchical *fiat*. The exalted priestly concept of "the religious" is being protected there by officialdom of the Roman Church.

The Protestant reassertion of the universality of "vocation" is essential Christianity, and therefore universal. Only as Christian insights and truths are *lived* can they be validated. Therefore, attention is given here to the Christian doctrine of vocation as it bears mainly on the problems of the "common laborer."

Man's worth and man's sin naturally affect his secular calling. Therefore, the focal insight for penetrating this problem of the laboring man is that *every* man is a child of God. Each man validates his primal relationship to the Creator and Sustainer through useful work. Creative work confirms the image of God in him. But man's continual rebellion against God and his sin are also realities. The pressures of work are a means of

<sup>2</sup> See Mills, C. Wright, *White Collar: the American Middle Classes*, The Oxford University Press, 1951.

<sup>3</sup> See Boulding, Kenneth E., *The Organizational Revolution: A Study in the Ethics of Economic Organization*, Harper & Brothers, 1953. This includes an excellent commentary by Reinhold Niebuhr.

<sup>4</sup> *Evangelization of Man in Modern Mass Society*, Study Department, World Council of Churches, October, 1949, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Schomer, Howard, "Anguish in the Church of France," *The Christian Century*, May 5, 1954, p. 548.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 547-548.

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 3:17b, American Trans. See also: Husslein, Joseph, *The Bible and Labor*, The Macmillan Company, 1924. Hutchinson, John, "The Biblical Idea of Vocation," *Christianity and Society*, Spring, 1948, pp. 9-16. Richardson, Alan, "The Biblical Doctrine of Work," *The Frontier*, March, 1951, pp. 109-120.

grace, tempering man in the midst of his son. This is the meaning of the curse: "Cursed shall be the ground through you, in suffering shall you gain your living from it as long as you live."<sup>7</sup>

Worth and sin affect the secular calling, and the demands of work wed man to reality. The stubborn, often painful fabric of work must be redeemed through fresh realization of the *sacredness* of the secular calling. Luther and Calvin, in rebelling against the high status given "the religious"—the monks and nuns—asserted that worship and ordinary work belong together.<sup>8</sup> God is well pleased with all work done in faith. "Hence also will arise peculiar consolation, since there will be no employment so mean and sordid (provided we follow our vocation) as not to appear truly respectable, and be deemed highly important in the sight of God."<sup>9</sup>

The Reformers were too uncritical of the fact that many persons do work for which they are obviously not suited. These certainly do not have a divine calling to do work in which they are inept by capacity or temperament or training; good reason for a job being "mean and sordid." Yes, this can be an excuse for anyone who wishes to shirk the challenge of his work, but it is a real dilemma for many. This is more obvious, of course, in our complex society.

Further, there seemed to be a too-ready acceptance of existing social forms and conditions in society at large outside the church. However, it seems that Calvin had more general social realism and political insight than did Luther.

St. Paul realized this difficulty when he wrote:

Only, let everyone lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him, and in which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. . . . Every one should remain in the state in which he was called. Were you a slave when called? Never mind. But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.<sup>10</sup>

Yet St. Paul seems to accept slavery as a vocation to which some are called. He says, "Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord."<sup>11</sup> He did tell masters to treat their slaves justly and fairly, but he countenanced the system. Although the system was imbedded deeply in the life of the time, it was wrong for those of a sensitive religious spirit. Paul, in returning Onesimus to Philemon, implored Philemon to accept

<sup>7</sup> See Watson, Philip S., "Luther's Doctrine of Vocation," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Dec., 1949.

<sup>8</sup> Calvin, John, *Institutes of Religion*, Book III, Ch. 10.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Cor. 7:17, 20-21, RSV.

<sup>11</sup> Col. 3:22, RSV.

Onesimus as more than a slave—even as a beloved brother. Paul thus compromised concerning slavery. Perhaps he had to, for the sake of his great missionary work. But this illustrates the necessity of evaluating critically the nature and conditions of the secular calling even as one affirms its sacredness. And this applies directly to some forms of modern industrial slavery-with-pay.

If one is, because of both his worth and his sin, to realize the sacredness of his secular calling, he must be prepared to view his work and working conditions critically, to the end that the most socially creative results are yielded, to the glory of God.

## II. THE MODERN DIVORCE

Not only in France and the "Christian" industrial world at large, but also in our own country, Christianity has largely lost the following of labor.

There are large churches without a single member who also belongs to a labor union. The characteristic supporters of the Christian movement are white collar workers, managers, professional people and farmers. The gravity of the loss is made vivid by the fact that, in some cities, meetings of labor unions are now held in labor "temples" at eleven o'clock on Sunday mornings.<sup>12</sup>

This great and tragic divorce heightens the formation and hardening of wrong attitudes toward vocations. Those in the church find it easier to feel that they are called to their vocations. The occupations represented among churchgoers are notably the "respectable" ones. They have more social prestige and recognition. In the same mood, the unsung necessary work, the quiet drudgery, "common labor," is looked down upon. The garbage man or the assembly-line worker or the domestic worker are not socially desirable in our churches.

The stereotypes are the certain consequences of separation, and they go both ways. The worker who toils with the monotonous, routine, tiring work of the world (as if much work for *all* did not contain this!) feels that the "upper crust" is really *playing* more than working. They have more freedom and can work as they please. They are the ones who have time for all the fineries and culture. They can afford to be religious.<sup>13</sup>

Both of these attitudes are dangerous, and widen the gulf of misunderstanding, even as the possibility of the Christian understanding of the sacredness of all useful work is lessened.

<sup>12</sup> Trueblood, D. Elton, *Your Other Vocation*, Harper & Brothers, 1952, p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> See this mood strongly stated in Carl Sandburg's moving poem, "The People Will Live On," from *The People, Yes*.

## III. THE LABORER

The laborer now receives our attention, because he illustrates most concretely and graphically problems which are involved in *all* work. Furthermore, besides his loss of the prestige which a craftsman formerly had, he himself wonders whether he has not also lost favor with man, and even with God, because of the very nature of his work. As the World Council Study Department says in a penetrating statement:

The worker knows that it is not the machine but, in the ultimate issue, it is *man* who enslaves and exploits. His trust in things and his pride in the technical achievements that control matter are therefore combined with a deep distrust of man, of words, of values, and of "the spirit." In the world of human relations, feelings and ideas, the worker feels himself at a disadvantage and is ill at ease. He is continuously aware of being treated as an asset, conscious of being exploited, because his work is done for others. And this leads to that profound bitterness and to that exacting spirit which seems to be insatiable, and in fact is insatiable, unless a radical change in the whole social fabric is effected.<sup>14</sup>

There are two basic observations which must be made concerning the laborer, before a consideration of positive steps toward the recovery of the Christian genius in vocations is pursued.

The first observation is this: The category of the "unskilled" needs incisive criticism. The unionization of all categories of factory workers, including those whose only training is "on the job," is a just criticism of the term. Unions do give an increasing number of laborers due status and recognition. Some unions carry this to an extreme in the exclusiveness of closed shop, exhibiting a group egoism akin to that of secret societies and lodges.

A person who lives his days in a category of work which is called "unskilled" needs, none the less, certain *definite* skills and dexterities. He must know certain processes and economies. There are certain physical and temperamental attributes (a flexible standard) which fit him for his work. Just anyone cannot do the work that is his, especially as he gains in competence. His endurance and steady devotion to his kind of hard work often mark a quality of accomplishment which the "skilled" would do well to emulate in their way and with their capacities and training. This basic integrity and competence should inspire *all* work.

When such workmanlike competence and conscious responsibility reaches the level of technical mastership and intense love for one's work, the workman becomes an artist, in the fine basic sense of that word. Not a finicking precisionist, nor a

<sup>14</sup> Study Department, World Council of Churches, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

temperamental showman, nor a manufacturer of pretty or romantic or classical or realistic art objects, but a doer of exceptional insight, skill, and devotion. Such a one may work in any of a thousand media: metal, cement, and stone; soil and growing things; fluids, fabrics, living bodies; words, tones, abstract symbols; desires, movements, concrete feelings. He may have any occupational label, or none. His artistry is not in his title nor his rank, but in his working and, deeper than that, in the dispositions from which his working springs.<sup>15</sup>

The second observation is that all socially creative vocations can be Christian vocations. This is logically obvious. The further implication is that all the very *necessary* work of the world which forms the steady hum in the background, which is taken for granted, and on which we are *all* dependent in this interdependent world—that all this is a vast territory with a multitude of opportunities for Christian witness. The first step in that witness is in doing the work exceptionally well and earning one's right to witness in a quiet and profound way to the genius of living Christianity.

#### IV. THE RECOVERY OF MEANING

Work weds man to reality. If his work seems to have little point in the scheme of things, he will feel that his life has little meaning in a deep sense—especially if he is too tired *after* work to discover meaning. Then comes the quick release, the temporary forgetting, and the early despair on the morrow when the work comes up again. And no man can stand meaninglessness. This is death, quick or sustained.

In order for there to be a recovery of meaning, the laborer must be exposed to the rich resource in the heart of Christianity, which gives his work and all of his living deep meaning and dedication.

What are some practical suggestions toward this end, as we think of the implications for "life and work" the world over? For one thing, there must be a reconciliation between the church and labor. This is the long view and goal. An important movement toward this end is the *re-awakening of lay religion*. The priesthood of all believers is the basis for a continuing reformation today.

Schools for the lay ministry such as Parishfield in Michigan, or Wainwright House in New York, or the School of the Lay Ministry in Springfield, Ohio, or the well-known Iona Community in Scotland,<sup>16</sup> to mention a few, are notable examples of training centers for the lay ministry. The Ecumenical Institute connected with the World Council of Churches, and

<sup>15</sup> Calhoun, Robert L., *God and the Common Life*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935, pp. 89-90.

<sup>16</sup> See Morton, Ralph T., *Household of Faith*, The Iona Community, 1951, and MacLeod, George, *We Shall Re-Build: The Work of the Iona Community on Mainland and on Island*, Kirkridge, 1945.



located in the Chateau de Bossey, Celigny, Switzerland, attracts Christian laymen from various countries and denominations who are engaged in the same kind of work, to gather and discuss the Christian meanings and implications in their vocations. The lay persons go back into their particular vocations with the meaning resources of the Christian faith and tradition fresh in their minds and hearts, and serve there in a way that professional religious workers cannot.

There is a convincing authority in the Christian witness of a person who is immersed in the same kind of work which one is doing himself. The stimulus of this movement must in time effect a reconciliation which will bring labor back into the church.

From this point on, there is no limit to the rich fabric of meanings which can be mediated through work. First, a sense of craftsmanship should be the standard in every job. This is the stimulus to do one's creative best. As the gravedigger in *Hamlet* says, "Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers and grave-makers: they hold up Adam's profession."<sup>17</sup> That is a sense of craftsmanship! This sense of craftsmanship can deepen and ripen into the fervency of love for one's vocation which frees one for fuller dedication to God in and through the work.

As the laborer develops craftsmanship in and love for his work, he finds that his personal responsibility extends outward in an ever-widening circle of meaning-relationships. From this point of immersion and competent responsibility for the ongoing work in his community of labor (for all work involves some human contact at some time—an obvious fact which is not so obvious when one experiences the blank stares, remoteness and preoccupation which accompany so much work), he has the fundamental right and duty to criticize present relationships and methods, to understand the over-all functioning of which his labor is a part, and to work personally and through established instruments, such as his union, for more just conditions. This is the outgoing exercise of one's Christian responsibility through his vocation. Each person must work for a sense of community if there is to be a richer realization of meaning and dedication in the work.

The machines may be impersonal, but the people manning them are doing so in the fullness and concretion of their persons. There are many moments during the day for the glance of communion, the salute, the wordless communication with those who share in the burden and promise of the flow of work. This is the creative level of Christian witness.

<sup>17</sup> *Hamlet*, Act V.

temperamental showman, nor a manufacturer of pretty or romantic or classical or realistic art objects, but a doer of exceptional insight, skill, and devotion. Such a one may work in any of a thousand media: metal, cement, and stone; soil and growing things; fluids, fabrics, living bodies; words, tones, abstract symbols; desires, movements, concrete feelings. He may have any occupational label, or none. His artistry is not in his title nor his rank, but in his working and, deeper than that, in the dispositions from which his working springs.<sup>15</sup>

The second observation is that all socially creative vocations can be Christian vocations. This is logically obvious. The further implication is that all the very *necessary* work of the world which forms the steady hum in the background, which is taken for granted, and on which we are *all* dependent in this interdependent world—that all this is a vast territory with a multitude of opportunities for Christian witness. The first step in that witness is in doing the work exceptionally well and earning one's right to witness in a quiet and profound way to the genius of living Christianity.

#### IV. THE RECOVERY OF MEANING

Work weds man to reality. If his work seems to have little point in the scheme of things, he will feel that his life has little meaning in a deep sense—especially if he is too tired *after* work to discover meaning. Then comes the quick release, the temporary forgetting, and the early despair on the morrow when the work comes up again. And no man can stand meaninglessness. This is death, quick or sustained.

In order for there to be a recovery of meaning, the laborer must be exposed to the rich resource in the heart of Christianity, which gives his work and all of his living deep meaning and dedication.

What are some practical suggestions toward this end, as we think of the implications for "life and work" the world over? For one thing, there must be a reconciliation between the church and labor. This is the long view and goal. An important movement toward this end is the *re-awakening of lay religion*. The priesthood of all believers is the basis for a continuing reformation today.

Schools for the lay ministry such as Parishfield in Michigan, or Wainwright House in New York, or the School of the Lay Ministry in Springfield, Ohio, or the well-known Iona Community in Scotland,<sup>16</sup> to mention a few, are notable examples of training centers for the lay ministry. The Ecumenical Institute connected with the World Council of Churches, and

<sup>15</sup> Calhoun, Robert L., *God and the Common Life*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935, pp. 89-90.

<sup>16</sup> See Morton, Ralph T., *Household of Faith*, The Iona Community, 1951, and MacLeod, George, *We Shall Re-Build: The Work of the Iona Community on Mainland and on Island*, Kirkridge, 1945.

located in the Chateau de Bossey, Celigny, Switzerland, attracts Christian laymen from various countries and denominations who are engaged in the same kind of work, to gather and discuss the Christian meanings and implications in their vocations. The lay persons go back into their particular vocations with the meaning resources of the Christian faith and tradition fresh in their minds and hearts, and serve there in a way that professional religious workers cannot.

There is a convincing authority in the Christian witness of a person who is immersed in the same kind of work which one is doing himself. The stimulus of this movement must in time effect a reconciliation which will bring labor back into the church.

From this point on, there is no limit to the rich fabric of meanings which can be mediated through work. First, a sense of craftsmanship should be the standard in every job. This is the stimulus to do one's creative best. As the gravedigger in *Hamlet* says, "Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers and grave-makers: they hold up Adam's profession."<sup>17</sup> That is a sense of craftsmanship! This sense of craftsmanship can deepen and ripen into the fervency of love for one's vocation which frees one for fuller dedication to God in and through the work.

As the laborer develops craftsmanship in and love for his work, he finds that his personal responsibility extends outward in an ever-widening circle of meaning-relationships. From this point of immersion and competent responsibility for the ongoing work in his community of labor (for all work involves some human contact at some time—an obvious fact which is not so obvious when one experiences the blank stares, remoteness and preoccupation which accompany so much work), he has the fundamental right and duty to criticize present relationships and methods, to understand the over-all functioning of which his labor is a part, and to work personally and through established instruments, such as his union, for more just conditions. This is the outgoing exercise of one's Christian responsibility through his vocation. Each person must work for a sense of community if there is to be a richer realization of meaning and dedication in the work.

The machines may be impersonal, but the people manning them are doing so in the fullness and concretion of their persons. There are many moments during the day for the glance of communion, the salute, the wordless communication with those who share in the burden and promise of the flow of work. This is the creative level of Christian witness.

<sup>17</sup> *Hamlet*, Act V.

Continual "sizing up" is done in those moments of work. The Christian forgets that he is also being judged by the current coin of hard work and affability, and rightly so. For his is an outgoing devotion to the work and to the communication with others which gets below the surface "sparring" on the job. The work of the lay priesthood goes on in this way.

Finally, Christian idealism must be tempered with Christian realism, to give weight and pertinence to man's realization of the image of God in him through useful work, to the sacredness of the secular calling and to the priesthood of all believers—still timely concepts.

So much of work *is* drudgery to be done in season for the sake of the welcome rhythm of *rest*. There are some jobs in which many will never find a sense of fulfillment, even in small measure. This specific form of injustice demands attention and change—a job most suited to the religiously sensitive who meet this dilemma in others and even in themselves. Man's soul is done radical damage by work which causes gnawing meaninglessness and inner disintegration.

Our wider vocation is in the true, sincere, singlehearted openness to becoming an instrument for God's grace and the spirit of Christ in the midst of work. This requires inner listening to the moments as they flow. Certainly this is a cantankerous world we live in, and "only the spiritually developed person can rise above all external circumstances and the world is inhabited chiefly by persons in the early stages of spiritual development. It is not enough for the world to be a gymnasium for saints."<sup>18</sup>

Since most of us who are sincerely trying to live the Christian meaning of life and vocation are "in the early stages," we know that the ideal which a Brother Lawrence puts before us is a goal toward which to work, even as we realize that Martin Buber's insight applies more directly to the work which a man who now labors offers to God:

Nevertheless, even he who lives the life of dialogue knows a lived unity: the unity of *life*, as that which once truly won is no more torn by any changes, not ripped asunder into the everyday creaturely life and the "deified" exalted hours; the unity of unbroken, raptureless perseverance in concreteness, in which the word is heard and a stammering answer dared.<sup>19</sup>

This unity of life, even and especially in the midst of its real contradictions and difficulties which make the unity a victory of the spirit—this unity, in all of its concentration of a rich texture of meaning in the

<sup>18</sup> Bennett, John, *Social Salvation*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935, p. 46.

<sup>19</sup> Buber, Martin, *Between Man and Man*, London: Kegan Paul, 1947, p. 25.

intercourse with reality, is the redemption the laboring man seeks, and desperately needs in the midst of his despair.

And what of the floods of meaning? Well, this paraphrasing of the words of Brother Lawrence is the goal we glimpse—the ultimate logic of these Christian vocational insights. Shall we say this is a modern Brother Lawrence of the *factory* speaking? <sup>20</sup>

The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my factory, when all the machines are busily humming and I and my fellow workers are busily ministering to the demands of our machines and assembly lines, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees in fervent prayer.

This is the challenge and the goal. As the World Council of Churches says, through Dr. Ralph Douglas Hyslop,

If it is recognised that laymen are the most natural and genuine representatives of the Church in the world, evangelism will not be regarded as a particular activity of the Church exercised by some specialists, but will become the normal result of the fact that everywhere in the world Christians live and work alongside other people. The Church as a whole may not speak so frequently in much-debated pronouncements formulated by the clergy. It will speak in a far more dynamic way by the decisions Christians take daily in their life in society. <sup>21</sup>

We Christian ministers, *lay* and otherwise, the world over, must seek the abounding sense of God's grace in the midst of our work, thus "holding the fabric of the world together," and offering it up to God. This is the goal, often so seemingly distant, which is the genius of the Christian meaning of vocation—of work done in the service of men and to the glory of God.

<sup>20</sup> My paraphrase of a quotation found in Brother Lawrence's *The Practice of the Presence of God*, Fleming Revell Co., 1895, p. 20.

<sup>21</sup> Hyslop, Ralph D., *Together to Be His Witnesses*, Study Department, World Council of Churches, 1953, p. 27.



# *The Christian and the Liquor Problem*

OSCAR F. GREEN

NO PROBLEM MORE VITALLY concerns our nation's health and morality than the liquor problem, and yet about no problem even among Christian people is so much foolishness talked. This foolishness extends all the way from the conviction of some teetotalers that the drinking of a glass of beer is in and of itself a major sin to that of some uninhibited individuals who feel that, since God made alcohol, to refuse to use it as a beverage is an affront to the graciousness of our Heavenly Father; from the absurdity of thinking that abstinence is the crown of Christian virtues to the illogicality of contending that since Christ used wine we should approve of cocktail parties.

The reasons for these misunderstandings are clear enough. Alcohol is a dangerous drug, and its excessive use a major social evil. Some Christians, conscious primarily of these particular facts, quite naturally argue that alcohol as a beverage ought to be outlawed. But not content to rest their case upon its merits, they become excited, indulge in loose talk, and put a curse on all who do not share their views. Other Christians not so sensitive to the evils inherent in the liquor traffic remember that, while drunkenness is a sin, the moderate use of alcohol does the body no great harm, and that through most of its centuries the church has stood for temperance rather than for abstinence. So they refuse to face present-day facts, rationalize an antisocial attitude, and conclude that all teetotalers are fanatics.

## I

We shall get much further with this baffling problem if we stop calling names, forget our clichés, and frankly ask ourselves just what alcohol is and, in view of its known properties, how we ought to deal with it, just as we are even now trying to discover how to handle sulfa drugs and the atom bomb.

Alcohol is a carbon compound, the by-product of fermentation, distillation, and digestion. It is generated also in the normal functioning of the

---

OSCAR F. GREEN, B.D., M.A., is Rector of All Saints' Episcopal Church, Palo Alto, California. He offers a vigorous and provocative article on a traditional yet thoroughly contemporary social problem.

human organism, but not in appreciable quantities, says Dr. James J. Fox, in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "except under abnormal conditions, the most common instances being the urine of persons suffering from diabetes or those addicted to the excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages." Whether this small amount of alcohol formed in the body is an aid to vital processes or an excretion it is hard to say. At any rate, the body ordinarily manufactures all the alcohol it can handle to advantage. Many doctors feel that older persons and others who are run down are benefited by the judicious use of wine or even drinks of higher alcoholic content. This may well be true, since every day doctors are prescribing for various conditions even the most deadly drugs. Moreover alcohol has innumerable and indispensable uses in the compounding of medicines, in art, cookery, and industry.

But besides its essential and beneficent properties, alcohol has other and dangerous ones. Its long continued and excessive use is highly deleterious to the physical organism, since its effects are cumulative, injuring the brain, the heart, the liver, the digestive tract, in fact the whole organism, this being the reason that about the first thing that a physician says to a patient suffering from any serious illness is, "Lay off alcohol."

Furthermore, it is a narcotic (not a stimulant as frequently assumed), which means that it gradually deadens, and taken in sufficient quantities, eventually paralyzes the central nervous system. Strangely enough, its first effects are upon the upper, that is to say the biologically latest developed nerve centers, those that pertain to morals and self-criticism. This is one reason why a few drinks give the illusion of well-being. All of us because of custom and our ideals, including religion, are restrained from free activity (most of us have inferiority complexes); alcohol lifts the restraint and makes the failure feel like a million dollars, even though he may be paying for his drinks with his baby's shoes.

Not the least dangerous property of alcohol is that it is habit-forming. It is patent that the rate at which persons form habits varies tremendously, according to their mental and physical peculiarities and their will power. Therefore the fact that some individuals can drink in moderation does not prove that alcohol is not habit-forming, but merely that tastes differ and that some persons have more control over habit than others. Eating is surely our most deep-seated habit, yet for any number of reasons countless persons have starved themselves to death. The fact that there are several million drunkards in the country and that nobody in his right mind wants to be a drunkard reveals the extent to which alcohol is habit-forming. Nor

does the fact that under *normal* conditions perhaps the majority of persons can resist becoming addicts mean too much in the over-all picture; for like California weather, conditions have a way of becoming unusual. All about us are persons who were once occasional drinkers convinced that they knew how to "handle their drinks." So they did, until there were financial reverses, or their consciences started bothering them, or there were family problems, or they felt that their business or social obligations demanded a larger use of intoxicants—and now they are no longer able to control themselves.

It is blindness to the fact that alcohol is habit-forming that has led some writers on the subject to conclude that all excessive drinking is a disease, or the result of some deep psychological maladjustment. This contention is hard to refute, for the simple reason that none of us is without psychological problems; but, if hard to refute, it is impossible to prove. For obviously not all persons with complexes become drunkards; nor is it evident that all drunkards have any major psychological conditions which do not arise from their drinking. Other things being equal, the simpler of two explanations is always to be preferred; and the simpler explanation here is that alcohol is habit-forming.

One of the most curious discussions in regard to the whole problem of intemperance revolves around the question as to why persons drink. In most Fundamentalist circles it is assumed that it is sin that makes people drink; Alcoholics Anonymous never tire of talking about disease. As a matter of fact, sin and disease have very little to do with the situation. Persons drink for very simple and obvious reasons; because many alcoholic beverages taste good, and their immediate and superficial effects can be most delightful. With adolescents (and some never outgrow adolescence) drinking is a sign of maturity and sophistication. And probably most important, drinking is the socially accepted thing to do. To desire these effects is neither sinful nor abnormal. To be sure, drinking when it represents a revolt against God and society is a form of sin; when it is the result of a mental or physical upset, it may be called disease; but most drinking belongs in neither category. Persons partake of alcoholic beverages for the same reasons that they drink coffee or eat ice cream, only the effects of alcohol are more exciting.

However, it should be noted that the taste for most alcoholic concoctions is acquired. On a pure basis of taste, without the great social pressure and the glamor advertising, and the exhilaration it gives, beer would be no more popular than limburger cheese. Drinks of high alcoholic

content are extremely irritating to the mouth and throat, as the wealth of jokes on the subject indicate. In fact, Dr. James J. Fox is of the opinion that the restorative qualities of whiskey or brandy in cases of fainting is due to the irritating effects of the liquor on the mucous membrane, the effect being the same as that of smelling salts. Far from there being an innate craving for alcohol as there is for salt, for instance, the desire for it is largely, except in the case of sweet wine, artificial. Of course, when we are really hungry or thirsty, we may try to consume anything that we can get into our mouths; and we can train ourselves to enjoy the most unlikely edibles, such as oysters and snails. So our nation is fast training itself to believe that a good meal is impossible without the addition of some kind of intoxicant.

## II

Perhaps, since many seem to think that one of the major contributions of Alcoholics Anonymous is their discovery that alcoholism is a disease, we should go a little more into detail in regard to the relationship between alcoholism and disease. It is evident that acute alcoholism is a disease, since it is a form of drug addiction, alcohol belonging to that class of drugs popularly referred to as "dope"—marijuana, morphine, heroin, opium. It differs in part from these other habit-forming drugs in that its action is less rapid, and that it takes a larger amount to upset the mental and physical equilibrium, although the ultimate effect is about the same. The drunkard is nothing more nor less than a drug addict. It has always been recognized that such a person is diseased; he can no longer control his appetites or his actions. His condition, to use the modern terminology, is psychosomatic; not only does he crave the drug with his mental and emotional nature, but his nervous system has become so inured to it that he suffers actual torture when he is deprived of it. However, moderate drinking and even occasional drunkenness are no more signs of disease than any willful abuse of the body.

Alcoholics Anonymous were wise to insist that the confirmed drunkard is a helpless invalid. It made such persons realize their inability to help themselves and encouraged them to surrender to God and the group therapy. Alcoholics Anonymous are wrong when they suggest that drunkards are a group set apart, who are afflicted with a special kind of disease which makes it impossible for them to use alcohol, while everybody else can go on and use it with impunity. Drunkenness is not a disease in the same sense that, say, diabetes is. Diabetes is due to the failure of the pancreas to supply sufficient insulin for the body to cope with the sugar

which it needs to sustain life. Sugar is a food which the body must have, and in health is able to handle even in enormous quantities. Alcohol is a poison which the body must eliminate in order to survive, and which taken in sufficient quantities causes the various organs of the body to *become* diseased. Obviously some persons are more sensitive to certain poisons than others; but anyone can become a drunkard just as anyone can become addicted to opium if he uses enough of it.

Somewhere along the line Alcoholics Anonymous discovered that the emphasis on disease, besides putting those who were asking for help in the proper frame of mind, had added psychological advantages in approaching those who were not yet convinced that they needed help or could be helped. Not to be able to control one's appetites is a form of weakness, but the weaker we are, the less we like to be told about it. Moreover, and we are repeating, drinking has strong social approval. To disapprove of drinking is, in innumerable clubs and social sets, to court ribaldry, not to say ostracism. It is almost as much a part of the pattern of social intercourse as having one's hair combed. Furthermore, during the fight to repeal the Eighteenth Amendment the liquor interests and the metropolitan press convinced the nonreligious part of our population and the Roman Catholic Church that all prohibitionists were hypocrites and kill-joys who wore crepe around their top hats. This propaganda was so effective that today there are intelligent persons who have the fantastic notion that the refusal to use alcohol as a beverage on moral, social, or religious grounds is a harmful psychological inhibition. The result of this social pressure toward drinking and all these wild theories about prohibitionists was and is that the average American is ashamed *not* to drink, is fearful lest someone will suggest that he "cannot handle his liquor," is afraid of being classed with prohibitionists, hates to have it thought that he is a weakling and has a fixation.

And lo, Alcoholics Anonymous found that they had ready at hand a method of combating all of these prejudices and fears. All they had to do was to keep talking about disease, not condemning the use of alcohol as such, but merely insisting that there are some who are allergic to it. This left the way open for society ladies and big businessmen to join the AA's and at the same time to continue to serve liquor to their friends, to approve of café society and cocktail parties, and to laugh at the silly old ladies in the W.C.T.U. They gave up liquor on the same basis as those whose hearts are troubling them give up salt. This talk about disease became a magnificent face-saving technique; but at the same time obscured the fact that alcohol is not delightful food like strawberries, which unfortunately



some persons react to unfavorably, but is a dangerous drug to which all of our bodies react unfavorably. To be sure, our bodies are amazing organisms and can stand a good deal of abuse; they eliminate from our systems any alcohol which we may consume as soon as possible and repair as far as possible any damage that has been done. But clearly we are in a dangerous way when we try to deceive ourselves about the nature of what we eat and drink. There are definite limits to the recuperative powers of our bodies, as all the drunkards of the world demonstrate.

Nothing that has been said is meant to detract from the good work of Alcoholics Anonymous; they have saved more drunkards than all other cures and agencies put together. We may well believe that their method of handling these unfortunates is inspired of God. Their principles approach perfection; their devotion to fellow sufferers is almost without parallel. Call alcoholism what you please; by all odds the best way to overcome the habit is: to admit that one cannot help oneself, become a teetotaler, call for help when tempted, commit oneself to helping others, and trust in God. That is the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, and we can thank God for it.

### III

As far as America is concerned, perhaps nothing has confused intelligent people faced with the growing menace of excessive drinking more than the foolish talk that goes on about the failure of prohibition under the Eighteenth Amendment. It is widely claimed that prohibition corrupted the nation, led to more drinking during prohibition than we had before the law was enacted or have had since it was repealed; that prohibition was "put over" while the boys were overseas and could not protect themselves; that prohibition proves that you cannot legislate morals; that repeal was a return to sobriety and sanity. In order to deal at all effectively with the admittedly confusing problem of liquor control, we need to get some of these absurdities straightened out in our minds.

We might begin with the one about legislating morals. Patently, drinking is a moral problem since it is a social problem, and all social problems are moral problems; and we legislate on social or moral problems every day. What the critics of prohibition really mean, however, when they say that it was an attempt to legislate morals is that prohibition is a question of private morals or religious principle, like going to church, or not eating meat on Friday, or not telling dirty stories, or gambling with one's friends at a friendly bridge game. They sometimes speak of it as sumptuary legislation, legislation for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many.

The classic illustration of sumptuary legislation is the law that prevailed in some monarchies that only the royal family could wear purple clothes.

But to think of drinking in this manner is puerile. Drinking affects the way persons drive, how they treat their families and their neighbors, and causes many to become wards of the state. Everybody knows this and everybody agrees that the sale and manufacture and the use of alcohol must be controlled. The only place where intelligent persons differ is to the extent and the nature of the control. Certainly we should not pass sumptuary laws and invade the domain of religion and private morals; but the use of liquor is no private matter. Inevitably some legislation is unwise, and one may argue reasonably that prohibition was unwise, but not on the ground that it was moral legislation, or sumptuary legislation, or that it invaded personal liberty—which is the intention of every law.

The question as to whether prohibition was "put over" would have only historical interest were it not that the charge implies that the whole prohibition movement was dishonest, with the implication that any such movement is bound to be. When persons believe this, even though they may believe that something should be done about the present liquor situation, they are afraid of liquor-control leagues and advocates of prohibition. So it is well to point out that over a period of forty years no political question, not excepting slavery, was ever more thoroughly discussed than prohibition; and that by 1916 before any of our boys thought of going overseas (in that year President Wilson was still keeping us out of war) the dries had a working majority in Congress, sufficient in 1917 to pass the Amendment and refer it to the states; and that it took only two years for the legislatures of three-fourths of the states to ratify it. To be sure, there was political maneuvering and money spent on both sides, but how else is any legislation ever passed?

Furthermore, the suggestion that all the soldiers who went to France were opposed to prohibition is absurd on the face of it. The draft was no respecter of persons: it took boys from Methodist homes in the South as well as the boys from Roman Catholic homes in our large cities. Furthermore, the majority of the boys were home before the Amendment went into effect; they would have caused trouble if they had all felt that they had been taken advantage of; but as a matter of fact nothing was done for twelve years. If anyone is interested in the subject, he might read *The Great Illusion*, by Herbert Asbury,<sup>1</sup> who, as his title suggests, is no

<sup>1</sup> Doubleday & Company, 1950. Mr. Asbury is a collateral descendant of Bishop Francis Asbury of the Methodist Church, and sometime associate editor of *Collier's*.

friend of prohibition; but he agrees that when the Amendment was passed it represented the will of the overwhelming majority of the electorate, although he thinks that the whole movement was stupid.

As to the amount of liquor consumed during prohibition, no one can say with any degree of accuracy. Herbert Asbury goes only so far as to say that everyone got as much liquor as he wanted and could pay for. This was doubtless true along the borders and sea coasts and in the large cities; in the smaller places it was not true. And even in New York and Chicago the cost of liquor was excessive, the quality always uncertain and frequently dangerous: both of these factors acted as deterrents on consumption. Throughout the interior of the country the obtaining and the transportation of liquor was exceedingly dangerous; and despite the propaganda to the contrary, large sections of the nation always had respect for the law. One index to the amount of liquor consumed would be the number of arrests for drunkenness. In 1910 there were 170,941 arrests; in 1927, when the repeal agitation was well under way, there were 91,367; and in 1953, 506,033.

Then it is claimed that prohibition corrupted the country; in fact, every evil has been blamed on prohibition, with the possible exception of the starting of World War II. Certainly prohibition produced its share of corruption, as every law does, because the purpose of any law is to force people to conform to a standard, and there are always those who refuse to conform. If money is to be made out of breaking the law, you may be sure that it will be widely violated; and there was big money in illegal liquor. But if one argues that prohibition was bad because it produced corruption, to be logical he must also condemn the income-tax law, because it has probably led to as much corruption as did prohibition.

All the evils of the twenties are laid at the door of prohibition; but this is absurd. Even though we grant, for the sake of argument, that the twenties were our most corrupt period, we should recognize that there were other causes for the corruption. To begin with, it was a postwar period, and all through history such periods have been notably corrupt. More than that, the twenties were the first years of the full emancipation of women. Custom before World War I forced the majority of women to restrain themselves to some extent. But during the war they went into industry and in 1920 were given the ballot. So during the twenties the ladies kicked up their heels and tried to prove to themselves and to their boy friends that they could do anything that a man could, could be just as clever and just as wicked. The twenties were also the period when automotive transportation came into its own. Incidentally, it was the

automobile that made prohibition so difficult to enforce. This was also the period of the rank growth of big business. All the bootleggers did was to apply the methods of big business to their own traffic.

But even so, let no one imagine that widespread lawlessness began with the enactment of the Eighteenth Amendment. There were always gangsters and criminals galore in this country. Those of us who are old enough can remember that long before prohibition there were many sections of our cities where it was not safe to be out alone after dark; and that half of our business sections were not considered decent for women, even during the daytime. Once again, if anyone is interested, he might read certain other of Mr. Asbury's books—*The Barbary Coast*, *The French Quarter*, *Gem of the Prairie*, and *The Gangs of New York*. Prohibition never taught any new tricks about sin; unfortunately it popularized certain old tricks and gave them new names, like "bootlegging."

The crown of the antiprohibition propaganda was that prohibition taught America to drink, and that with repeal we should return to sobriety and sanity. Of course, it might take a few years to get over the poisonous virus of prohibition, but as soon as the average American realized that he could get all the good liquor he wanted and stopped revolting against blue laws, he would settle down and nobody would get drunk, saloons would never come back, and crime would largely wither away. It is now more than twenty years since the Eighteenth Amendment was repealed; a new generation has arisen which does not know what a speakeasy is; and what do we find? Liquor sales in 1952 amounted to \$3,165,000,000. The arrests for drunkenness in 1953 was the highest ever, 290 per hundred thousand population. Crime is on the increase: it was up 2.5 per cent during the first six months of 1953. Deaths from automobile accidents are about 34,000 a year. Juvenile delinquency, mental illness, cirrhosis of the liver increase by leaps and bounds. It would be silly to attribute all these evils to the repeal of prohibition, just as it is silly to think that all the ills of the twenties were due to prohibition; but it is not silly to compare the two periods, and to note that there is much more lawlessness today than there was in those wicked days when federal agents roamed the country supposedly driving decent people into crime.

#### IV

The failure of prohibition has posed a problem for all Christians. It has led many to feel that it is a mistake to try to control the evils of the liquor traffic through legislation, with the result that our liquor laws are

now largely made by the brewers and distillers. This is a mistake: liquor legislation is part of the business of the church. There is little hope of national prohibition for many years to come; and before it comes again we should be better prepared for it. The failure of prohibition was largely the fault of the dries, who thought the battle was won when the Eighteenth Amendment was adopted. Prohibition can be more easily enforced (not perfectly, to be sure, but more easily) than the income-tax law; but it will require over-all planning under the Department of Justice and the support of a large majority of our people. The only indication today that prohibition will return is the growing arrogance of the liquor interests.

The fact that national prohibition is today only a dream does not relieve Christian people of the responsibility of taking some stand in regard to this major social evil. Of course, we should give aid and encouragement to Alcoholics Anonymous. However, their work is purely remedial. It is equally important to do something to prevent persons from becoming alcoholics. There are two sides to this problem—one personal and one legal.

The liquor interests are very rich and very powerful and well-organized; their aim is to encourage everyone to drink as much as he has money to spend. The National Beer Wholesalers Convention meeting in San Francisco last May received with prolonged applause the suggestion of Mr. Robert Gros, Personnel Director of the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, that the brewers should attempt to enlarge their business at the expense of milk, orange juice, and other potables, despite the fact that the consumption of alcoholic beverages has increased in the last two decades 254 per cent, from 8.37 gallons per capita in 1934 to 21 gallons per capita in 1951. The problem is becoming daily more serious. We have as much reason to outlaw, and if that is impossible rigidly to control alcohol, as we have to outlaw and control any other form of "dope." Therefore, we should preach and teach about the dangers of alcohol, should support antiliquor organizations, try to elect dry representatives, labor for local-option laws. Every town and city should have some group working on the problem of liquor control. We have lost one campaign, but the war is not over. It will go on until we become a nation of drunkards or have prohibition again.

In view of these facts: that the body normally manufactures sufficient alcohol for healthy functioning; that by the use of alcohol a person is in danger of becoming an addict, and even though by dint of circumstances and will power he averts that calamity, he still sets an example to others, some of whom will fall prey to the habit; that it is clear that there is no more nefarious influence in our country than the organized forces of the



liquor interests—therefore, it would appear to be wise for any Christian who has his own interests and those of society at heart, completely to forego the use of alcohol as a beverage. This is much easier said than done, for the social pressure to drink is tremendous, and the refusal to drink is in most eyes a sign of fanaticism.

As a matter of fact many Christians *have* been fanatical on the subject, and strangely so, for nowhere does the Bible directly teach abstinence from alcoholic beverages. The use of wine is taken for granted throughout both Old and New Testaments. The Psalms speak of "the wine that maketh glad the heart of man," and St. Paul advises Timothy to use "a little wine for thy stomach's sake," and when Jesus instituted the Lord's supper he used wine, which was the common table drink. (There is no reason to suppose that this was unfermented grape juice.) The historic Christian ideal has been temperance.

On what basis, then, do we advocate that we change the historic ideal of temperance to one of abstinence? Really on several bases. First, that we know more about alcohol than former generations did. Because strong drink made our forefathers feel good, they supposed that it helped them. Except in special cases we know that this was not so. Second, that alcohol is no longer needed to dull pain as it formerly was. We have many safer and more effective drugs. Third, that our whole civilization has changed, from a rural to an urban one, from an agricultural to an industrial one, from an understimulated to an overstimulated society. If in the old days occasionally on holidays farmers drank too much elderberry wine, it was only a family affair; but today if persons drink too much in an apartment house, they become public nuisances. If in the last century a cowboy rode into town and got drunk, his horse would walk back to the ranch with him. But today when his grandson drives sixty miles to a city, and with many cocktails under his belt essays to navigate the superhighway at seventy miles an hour, he is a menace to everyone he passes. Gasoline and alcohol won't mix, without someone sooner or later getting hurt. Before the turn of the century when our lives were less complicated and a psychologist was someone who taught in a university, it was not too serious if the average American sometimes overcelebrated. But today we live under tension all the time, and alcohol increases the tension, filling our hospitals with psychopaths and wrecking millions of homes. Fourth, that it is one thing to accept a custom unthinkingly and something else to continue to conform to a custom that we know to be deadly.

This last point explains the attitude of Jesus and his apostles. In the

first century, everybody, with the exception of a few ascetics, drank and always had. The early church, occupied with other problems—challenged by totalitarianism, trying to throw off the yoke of Judaism and heresies of one kind and another, combating paganism with its idolatry, cruelty, and unbridled lust—did not get around to the problem of alcoholism. This is not to be wondered at; the church did not get around to countless other social issues, most notably slavery, but also the needs for public charity, the penal system, universal education, and democracy. Jesus himself in the short years of his ministry had hardly time to outline the basic principles of religion and morality. He left their social applications to us.

To argue that because Jesus is silent concerning abstinence, we are not on firm ground in advocating it, is as much a sophistry as it was for some of our forebears to defend slavery because the Bible takes it for granted. (*Mirabile dictu*: one of the last major defenses of slavery was written by a bishop of the Episcopal church.) We only gradually see the full implications of the gospel. We have put slavery behind us: we are now in the process of putting war and alcohol behind us. If St. Paul, burdened with the care of all the church, once talked about "a little wine for the stomach," he also said that if meat offended his brother, he would eat no meat. As a rule of ethics that is an impossible dictum: we cannot govern our lives by the whims of our neighbors. On the other hand, it drives home a basic Christian principle—that we have a responsibility for all those with whom we come in contact. We are members one of another; we are our neighbor's keeper. If Jesus never condemned the moderate use of alcohol, he did say that a man should love his neighbor as himself; and since I know that alcohol may well destroy my neighbor, I have no business offering it to him, or by my example encouraging him to use it.

Many are still not convinced, however, that abstinence is the answer to our problem. They argue that the abuse by a few does not call for non-use by the many. They point out that scores are being killed every day by automobiles, but that no one seriously advocates outlawing motor transportation. This argument is not nearly so impressive as it first seems. It is a question of relative values. Motor vehicles have become a necessity for our Western society as now organized, although the motor car is only fifty years old, and simpler societies even today get along without it. Nevertheless, even nonmotorized cultures have their transportation problems. The use of horses and mules was not without its casualties. And societies without steam and gasoline engines are forced to turn human beings into beasts of burden. So it would appear that the good that cars do far

outweighs the misery they entail. Nothing comparable can be said for the use of alcohol as a beverage; the most that can be said is that, properly used, it is a pleasant "relaxer." A better analogy would be that of a vicious dog, which may be perfectly safe for the owner's family, but will bite any stranger it can reach. Should a Christian own such a dog? Well, as soon as the dog bites someone, if the Christian cannot make up his mind about his duty, society makes it up for him and has the dog destroyed. Clearly the safety of society is far more important than one's individual pleasure.

We shall never get anywhere with this problem until we stop rationalizing, going off on tangents, talking foolishness, being horrified at our neighbors, and try to be a little objective. Alcohol is the result of natural processes and therefore we may say that God made it. But when imbibed in excessive quantities it plays havoc with the central nervous system, and with every vital organ. Any beverage containing more than two or three per cent of alcohol is dangerous. Since this is true, laws controlling the use of high-percentage beverages are not sumptuary but social legislation. It is as logical for society to outlaw alcohol as a beverage as for it to outlaw any other narcotic, although the wisdom of any legislation in a democracy is contingent upon the will of a large majority of the electorate, and upon the integrity of the law-enforcing agencies. No matter how wise a law is, if most people do not want it, and the police and the courts refuse to enforce it, its passage will do more harm than good.

As far as the individual Christian is concerned, personal temperance is not a sufficient ideal. To use the word properly, temperance should be applied to those things which, like bread or meat or candy, are only in excess evil or harmful. One does not normally speak of a temperate use of poison, although the body if properly conditioned will tolerate fairly large doses of many poisons, strychnine, for instance. When a thing is bad for us the ideal is abstinence, not temperance. We should *abstain* from fornication, and *be temperate* in our use of language. Since alcohol is bad for us, the only intelligent and Christian thing to do is to leave it alone, always standing firm for our principles. At the same time we should realize that there are more basic sins than the improper use of alcohol and there are good Christian people who do not see eye to eye with us, many of them better Christians than we are. And that the virtue of abstinence can be more than offset by the deeper sin of spiritual pride.

## John Wesley and His Preachers

DOUGLAS R. CHANDLER

METHODISM HAS INHERITED from John Wesley some disquieting ideas about the ministry. The disturbing quality in what he said is increased by his clarity and by the obvious relevance of his words to his purpose. Wesley was sometimes enigmatic, but when he spoke about the ministry he was not as puzzling as we sometimes wish he were. His theological position is sufficiently involved for serious study; his particular views on justification, Christian perfection, sin and the church have room for research and argument; but about his preachers he spoke too plainly to be abstruse.

They could not possibly have misunderstood his bluntly spoken words and, at the same time, they must not have doubted his affection for them if chastening is at all a measure of love. Calling them by their first names he gave them sharp advices about their reading, preaching, praying, and conversation; their clothes, food, health, and debts; and, first and last, their obedience to him. And what that enthusiastic Anglican presbyter had in mind when he chose his helpers, trained them and charged them with heavy duty is of far more than historic or academic interest because, after two hundred years, his point of view and practice speak with startling effectiveness on our own questions about ministerial qualifications, training, and responsibility.

On this matter of the ministry it is easy to dull the cutting edge of Wesley's teaching (and thereby make it less disturbing) if we analyze his theory while ignoring his practice. John Wesley was not at his best when theorizing about his actions; he often let practical considerations play havoc with his own and with others' logic. In solving the problem of preacher-leadership over his societies he seemed to abandon the tradition of his Church for the sake of a New Testament imperative, with the result that in practice he established a pattern of nonconformity, while claiming at the same time the theoretical validity of a New Testament and primitive orthodoxy.

As he saw it, the fields were white for the harvest, good laborers were too few, his Church was inert and ineffective; therefore with the

---

DOUGLAS R. CHANDLER, A.M., S.T.B., is Professor of Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary, Westminster, Maryland. He offers a challenging account of Wesley's training of his lay preachers.

help of the Lord he would select laborers and send them forth. From the standpoint of ecclesiastical order this was anarchy, but it was expert churchism of a kind, cutting through red tape and achieving the desired results quickly. Some said that he should have been less precipitate, but apparently when he looked at the "fields" of Bristol, Newcastle, and London, what he saw there would not let him wait. What he did, therefore, under these pressures and in these emergencies is an important commentary on the Christian ministry as it was regarded in early English Methodism and points to some marginal implications on that ministry for today.

# I

In the first place, although the early Methodist preachers felt themselves divinely called, they learned at once that by Wesley they were chosen. The first of them, it is true, seemed not to wait for his signal to begin, for John Cennick and Thomas Maxfield were already expanding exhortations into sermons when Wesley was awakened to the preaching potential in unordained men. That was in 1740. He had a struggle, when the news came to him, with this thought of Maxfield preaching at Foundery. Returning to London from a preaching trip, Wesley met his mother. She saw a storm brewing and asked the cause. "Thomas Maxfield has turned preacher, I find," Wesley replied, in that clipped, laconic way that sometimes gave the impression of scorn.

The historian, John Simon, wonders at this point if Susanna Wesley recalled her own preaching in the old Epworth Rectory when her husband was away. She said quietly to her son, "John . . . take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as surely called of God to preach as you are . . . hear him yourself."

Wesley was fair. He decided to hear Maxfield preach—heard and was convinced. "It is the Lord," he said, and began to assist the Lord in choosing and sending out men, twenty in a year, forty in four years, so that by 1791, the year of Wesley's death, those whom he had called "a handful of raw young men, without name, learning or eminent sense" had increased to more than a thousand traveling and local preachers. Among them were "not many wise according to worldly standards, not many powerful, not many of noble birth"—but there were John Nelson, Thomas Walsh, Robert Strawbridge, Francis Asbury, and Captain Webb, with occasionally a scholar like Adam Clarke and, generally, enough learning to prove the rector of Birmingham wrong when he spoke of them as "hair-brained, itinerant enthusiasts." Lady Huntingdon, writing



to John Wesley about Thomas Maxfield, spoke for thousands who heard these "sons in the gospel": "He is my astonishment! How is God's power shown in weakness!"

Wesley selected these men *to preach*. Because this was their most conspicuous work they were popularly called "the preachers," and because they were laymen he had to defend their right to *be preachers*. This he did by a thoughtful dissertation on the historic and Scriptural precedents for lay preaching, and then waved his whole argument aside, saying, typically, "I believe it may be defended in a shorter way." Thereupon he summarized the whole issue in a terse abstract: souls, he said, "lay at stake," an "extreme necessity" had arisen, "no clergyman would assist at all," so an "expedient" was found to which "God immediately gave a blessing." That is a fair sample of Wesley's method of argument. With history and Scripture on either side and an emergency before him, what clearer case could be found?

By such *pragmatic sanctions* as this Wesley put a procedure of control on the delicate matter of the *call* to preach. All charismatic claims came at once under his examining eye and, soon, under the judgment of the Conference. A man's felt call alone never constituted his right to preach—to Methodists. Wesley would say: He thinks he has the *grace*—let us see if he has the *gifts*. Has he a clear and lasting sense of the love of God? Has he sound understanding? any degree of utterance? *can* he speak? If we think so, after hearing him and examining him, "we allow him to be called of God to preach." To many this seems to be an insufferable intrusion into the realm of the Spirit, but to Wesley it simply applied the intention and spirit of the apostles when they said, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us."

## II

Once having selected men to preach, Wesley seemed to assume a paternal responsibility for their success in that assignment. He was their homiletics department in the preparation and delivery of sermons. Speak plainly, he told them, without tedious arguments, without elegance (no purple patches), and without screaming. To John King, Wesley wrote, "Scream no more at the peril of your soul. . . . Speak as earnestly as you can . . . but with a moderate voice." Apparently several had more zeal than skill. Adam Clarke, Wesley wrote, preached too loud and too long. That was "a sure way of cutting his own throat."

One kind of preaching Wesley particularly deplored—that which majored in controversial opinions. He would not tolerate a contentious

disputant. "In public speaking," he wrote to one preacher, "speak not one word against opinions of any kind. We are not to fight against notions but sins." Surprisingly, Wesley's list of "notions" included what most people have regarded as some big issues: predestination, baptism, modes of worship, definitions of the Trinity. He may have allowed himself more latitude here than he gave his helpers, but the example he set in a letter to Alexander Coates is eloquent: "I have preached twenty years in some of Whitefield's Societies, yet to this day I never contradicted him among his own people; I did not think it honest, neither necessary at all. I could preach salvation by faith and leave all controversy untouched."

There is a hint that Coates had made a bad showing in public controversy. "Indeed," Wesley said, "you have not a talent for it. You have an honest heart, but not a clear head. Practical religion is your point. . . . O Sander, know the value of peace and love!"

What Wesley was demanding was an economy of words and a plain style. His preachers were not to be vague about sin or sins but should name specific wrongs: smuggling, bribery, drunkenness, laziness, display of wealth. They must speak briefly, but often. He set his own pace before them: five preaching appointments on Sunday and twelve for the week. How foolish they would be (though some of them did try!) to put theoretical and learned disputations before those audiences—rough, illiterate, and sometimes hostile crowds of miners, coachmen, soldiers, servants; people who had not been within a church since the day they were christened and who could be reached only through strategy before or after their long working days. A box to stand on, a little knoll, a sloping hill, a gallows, a sheltering tree would suffice (no worship center!), and if they followed his example they would not preach in a field full of loose stones.

It soon became clear to Wesley that too many of his helpers thought that preaching was their only duty. This he attributed to laziness and to a longing for the security they had surrendered when they "joined" him. He insisted that he had chosen them to travel and to visit. In this, both the itinerancy and pastoral care became essential elements, woven inextricably together, in the Methodist discipline. Here again the urgency of the situation made its demand, calling, for the most part, for men without roots, unmarried men preferably, without family burdens. They were not to attach themselves to societies. They belonged to an itinerancy for, he said, "We know our calling. The Methodists are not to continue in any one place under heaven." When the Scotch murmured at this he wrote, "We are called to be itinerants. Those who receive us must receive

us as such. And if the Scotch will not, others will." (He was, perhaps, a little more accurate in this prediction than he realized.)

Few could match Wesley as an itinerant. At the age of eighty-eight, on his twenty-second visit to Scotland, he wrote, "I travelled yesterday nearly eighty miles and preached in the evening at Glasgow without pain." He was displeased somewhat with the Glasgow Methodists, by the way, for he thought that their society was in a state of arrested development; his reason was that one of their preachers had stayed too long (two or three months), preaching the while only three or four evenings a week and on Sunday mornings. "If he is but half alive," said Wesley, "what will the people be?"

He admitted that visiting was a "heavy cross" and "no way pleasing to flesh and blood." But the health of the societies depended on it. At Colchester he found that the membership had decreased although they had had as good preachers as could be found. But that was not sufficient. "Though a man preach like an angel he will neither collect nor preserve a society . . . without visiting them from house to house." Too often his helpers would not see it. One day, when he was seventy-one, he wrote, "I began at the east end of the town (London) to visit the society from house to house. This is so grievous to flesh and blood that I can prevail on few even of our preachers to undertake it."

### III

One of Wesley's thorniest problems was the education of his "raw young men." Because he wanted them to have some literary, philosophical, and theological equipment he pressed on them many sensible directives, particularly about their reading. His own reading was extensive. It included (to select a few names at random) Virgil, Cicero, Eusebius, the *Theologia Germanica*, Machiavelli, Rousseau, Voltaire, Swedenborg, Knox, and Mosheim. Rousseau he called a "consummate coxcomb," and he said the same of Voltaire. The *Theologia Germanica* was "obscure" and Swedenborg was an "entertaining madman." It could never be said of Wesley that he slipped into the scholastic error, derided by Erasmus, of avoiding a conclusion by means of a distinction. On the contrary, he judged books readily with a scholar's eye on the critical selection of his preachers' reading.

He knew *they* were not scholars; at least not the kind described (was it by Macaulay?) as a man who reads Greek with his feet on the fender. In our automotive age it may need saying that this fender was not over

a wheel but about a fire, and the attitude in the figure is not one of tension but of relaxation and pleasure—even with a Greek book.

Wesley knew this kind of true scholarship. He could read and speak Latin, Greek, and German, and he had apparently some skill in the use of French, Italian, and Spanish, but he knew that his preachers were not as he. So he gave them Law's *Call*, Baxter's *Rest*, Alleine's *Alarm*, Taylor's *Rules*, Fletcher's *Checks*, and a *Christian Library* of great books which he had cut down to their intellectual proportions. Most of these he prescribed for all the members of his societies as well as for his helpers. "I wish all our preachers," he said, "both in England and Ireland would herein follow my example and frequently read in public and enforce select portions of *The Christian Library*." If a preacher said, "But I read only the Bible," Wesley replied, "You are got above St. Paul." And if one said, "I have no taste for reading," Wesley's answer was, "Contract a taste for it by use, or return to your trade."

The books to be read by the assistants were named at the first Conference in 1744. In addition to his own *Tracts* they were assigned the Greek New Testament, and selections from Plato, Homer, Caesar, Horace, Virgil, Epictetus, Erasmus, Usher, Arndt, Boehme, and Pascal. By these, says Nehemiah Curnock, the itinerancy became "a peripatetic school of learning." Wesley was pleased with the results. In comparison with Church of England men, he once remarked, his itinerants could pass the examinations "in substantial, practical divinity" as easily as could the University candidates for holy orders.

There was more, however, to this reading schedule than trying to keep up with the Anglicans. Wesley was determined that his preachers be able to meet the deistic rationalism of the day (which he equated with infidelity) with more than emotion and enthusiasm. In his mind, no education, least of all that of the ministry, should set reason apart from or against religion. His famous *Appeals*, addressed to men of reason and religion, show this. Fact and feeling, he thought, had an honest claim in Christianity; consequently, under his control, the Methodist movement tended to encourage a fairly steady exodus from its ranks of those who were overloaded with either emotional mysticism or theological dogmatism. In the formative decades, at least, a cooperative balance here was essential.

#### IV

Wesley's thinking about the ministry is nowhere more dramatically displayed than in the Conferences he had with his preachers. The first

of these was in the last week of June, 1744, when five Anglican clergymen and four lay preachers met with him in London "to hear their views and announce his decisions." Extant records of what happened show clearly whose mind was in control and years later (in 1770), in a letter to Thomas Taylor, Wesley confidently described his own sovereignty: "One and another and another (of the preachers) desired to join with me as sons in the gospel to be directed by me. I drew up a few plain rules [observe there was no Conference in being!] and I permitted them to join me on these conditions."

Did any of the preachers object to his mastery? Yes. Brother M'Nab "... would have it a common cause ... he thinks they have a right so to do. So they have. They have a right to disjoin themselves from me whenever they please ... as long as any preacher joins with me he is to be directed by me in this work. ... I then desired some of our preachers to meet me in order to advise not to control me."

Against our complex gearing of commissions and committees, such a "conference" relationship as this between Wesley and his preachers seems grotesquely simple. Evangelism, social relations, temperance, Christian education and church extension, now often formalized and easily abandoned as delegated responsibilities, were then the obsessions of each and every man. Too, such conference concerns as minimum salary and retirement security would not be found on the earliest Conference agendas, because all of Wesley's preachers (including himself) were already on minimum salary, and retirement was not a big problem because most of them (excepting himself) died, worn out, while still young. At any rate, whatever there was of organization Wesley seems to have been it.

This is not what we would call, of course, proper conference procedure, but it seems to have been, for that eighteenth-century emergency, a necessary combination of the life of the Spirit and the hand of iron. The impressive thing is that the preachers in Conference saw their calling in a new light. The connectional character of their vocation became as real to them as Wesley's authority over it. Free-lance tendencies faded at once or were suppressed by corporate consent. An urgency "to spend and be spent," almost eschatological in its force, had brought them together; now the leaven of a growing group consciousness and a united effort at self-examination did its work. All of self was surrendered to a common hope in a shared discipline. All speech, attire, thought, laughter, and leisure, all conduct and every moment of time, were caught in this crucible of devotion. Wesley and his preachers were together in this, and his own manner of life was taken, apparently without question, as their pattern for behavior.



*The Rules of an Assistant*, accepted by the Conference and later appearing as *The Twelve Rules of a Helper*, were clear, hard canons for both personal holiness and ministerial ethics. Negatively, there must be no evil speaking nor harsh criticism of others, no wasting of time, no lightness of speech or thought, no touching of women ("keep your hands off 'em"), no personal wealth and no debts without Wesley's knowledge. Positively, they were to be humble, punctual, poor, and obedient. ("Do not mend our rules but keep them. . . . Act in all things not according to your own will but as a son in the Gospel.") And "by all means," the Conference agreed, they should keep Journals "as well for our satisfaction as for the profit of their own souls."

With such apocalyptic seriousness the preachers answered all Conference questions prayerfully, coming usually to Wesley's point of view about themselves and their work without prolonged debate. Afterwards he sent them out to days and nights of hard traveling with small pay, few comforts, little honor. If they survived the mobs, imprisonments, and diseases of the year, they met with him again, singing as their opening hymn:

And are we yet alive  
And see each other's face?  
Glory and praise to Jesus give  
For his redeeming grace.

At seventy, Wesley described what a preacher should be:

He must be a man of faith and love, and one that has a single eye to the advancement of the kingdom of God. He must have a clear understanding; a knowledge of men and things, particularly of the Methodist doctrine and discipline; a ready utterance; diligence and activity, with a tolerable share of health. There must be added to these, favour with the people, with the Methodists in general. . . . He must likewise have some degree of learning because there are many adversaries, learned as well as unlearned, whose mouths must be stopped. But this can not be done unless he be able to meet them on their own ground.

This letter was written begging John Fletcher to succeed Wesley as leader of the movement, to come and "stand in his place." "Thou art the man!" said Wesley. The aged Fletcher did not agree. Actually, no one man could stand in Wesley's place, but many "assistants" could and, in some sense, did. When the croaking prophets warned, "All is at an end . . . when Mr. Wesley drops," the little Anglican presbyter looked on his helpers and preached to them a Conference sermon on one of their favorite texts, "What hath God wrought!"

# The Danger of Preaching

PHILIP SHEN

WHEN I SUGGESTED to a friend that I planned to talk on "The Danger of Preaching," she chuckled and said, "What danger is there? No one will listen to you!"

There is nothing that illustrates better the contrast between the modern unprovocative preacher and a fiery prophet like Jeremiah. When we read his bitter soliloquy (Jer. 20:7-18), we are reminded that Jeremiah had been threatened at least three times; even his neighbors in his own home town plotted to destroy him. Today, in the Christian West, it seems, the Word of God no longer endangers the one who presumes to speak it. There is no mob that a preacher has to confront. The situation is different. Perhaps the message of God is no longer rugged and sharp, as was that of almost every one of the great Old Testament prophets. As long as we exercise some prudence, we can preach with immunity from the pulpit—which often reminds me of a castle high up and fortified. Can we even imagine that once upon a time the pulpit was the gate of Jerusalem, or the portal of the Temple itself, on which the spokesman of God *exposed* himself to the treacherous authorities and the unreasoning crowd, simply because he dared to say what the Lord wanted the people to know, whether they liked it or not?

When Jeremiah spoke, he ran into danger. Why? Because people *listened* to him. Today there is no risk to preaching, primarily because so much of it does not make a difference. There seems to be a tacit agreement between the preacher and the congregation that he is not to say things that they don't want to hear, and anyway they are not obliged to listen to him. There is a custom in American churches that interests me. After the service the minister greets everybody at the door. People shake hands with him, and take leave politely, at times complimenting him as they go by about the morning sermon. I often ask myself, Is that all his preaching deserves? Was it Josh Billings who once said that a man should never prophesy, because

---

PHILIP SHEN is a Chinese student from Manila, Philippines, where his father has been ministering to the oversea Cantonese people. A graduate of the Philippine Christian Colleges, active in both church and school at home, he is now pursuing an M.A. degree in the Graduate School of Theology, Oberlin College. The article was originally intended as a talk to fellow students in a class in homiletics.

if you are wrong no one will forget you, and if you are right no one will remember you? Most ministers will agree that one might better not preach every Sunday, for whether you are right or wrong, people usually give you a smile and a handshake and promptly dismiss the whole thing. There seems to be a deadly assumption that a congregation can take or leave the word of God as they please—as no one can ever be sure today whether what the preacher has to say is the Word of God or not, even if he actually has something to say, which is rare.

Phillips Brooks, in advising young preachers, says that a man first wonders when he begins to preach, why people don't come; after a while, if he is good for anything, he begins to wonder why they do. If we realized that, more often, maybe it would be an honest act for us to stop preaching once in a while, tear our own sermons apart, and see if there is any stuff left in them besides conventional religious clichés. How much, one asks, has the world changed, after so many sermons have been preached on so many Sundays, and at so many churches around the world? The danger of preaching is to let oneself be satisfied with a lot of noise that passes for preaching simply because it comes forth from one's own mouth; the danger of preaching is to let it become so *inconsequential* in real life.

Why does preaching so often make no difference to our people? I submit that one of the most important reasons is that it first does not make much difference to us. And I mean real difference, something that moves deep within our *self*, something that disturbs rather than comforts, something that shakes the roots rather than showering the leaves with warm sunshine and cool raindeaws. A sermon must touch the core of our being before we can hope to have it even scratch the surface of other souls.

My father, like many ministers, always kneels at the second stanza or so of the sermon hymn (in our church we kneel to pray). I never understood it fully until one Sunday morning, when my father asked me to give a farewell address to the congregation with whom I had grown up as a boy. To be honest with them, and with the word of God, between which I was supposed to serve as a bridge or a channel, I suddenly came to the realization that before I entered the pulpit, something had to be put right within myself. The Spirit seemed to whisper, when all the congregation was singing the sermon hymn: "How can I use you, when you are the one standing in the way?" I knelt down and prayed. It was a prayer I learned at that moment: "O Lord, stop me when *I* speak; only speak thyself through me." Whether the sermon I preached afterward was worthy or not, I never found out. But one thing I know, it changed me.

*Life Magazine* more than a year ago published a write-up of Billy Graham. A full-page picture showed him kneeling in his hotel room before he left for an evangelistic rally. Irrespective of my attitude toward his message and methods, I cannot doubt that whatever power he has in moving thousands of people, he must have appropriated from constant prayer. It would be impossible for him, as it was for Finney, Wesley, or any other evangelist, without taking the whole business of preaching with the *utmost seriousness*, which I take it is what prayer means. There was the time when Jesus retreated to the wilderness or the mountain, alone, and communed with God. There was the time when Jeremiah, in all his solitariness, cried out to God for strength and vindication. God spoke through Jeremiah; God "persuaded" him, he had to "yield" to God's power, as Moffatt translates it (Jer. 20:7).

The first and last requirement of preaching, therefore, is that it must make some difference to the preacher himself. Preaching may be a routine, as it often appears now, but nothing can be properly called a routine when God speaks. It will be mere routine, indeed, when he doesn't. The only way to find out whether he does or not, is to ask ourselves whether or not we have really prayed for our preaching. By all means, let us anticipate anyone who would have doubts whether we are, after all, serious. For us preachers to treat preaching lightly in any way is disastrous. Jesus' terrible words apply to us especially. "I tell you," he warned, "on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter; for by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned" (Matt. 12:36f., R.S.V.). Let us then approach every occasion in fear and trembling, lest our words from the pulpit seal our verdict.

It is so noticeable when preaching becomes a routine, when sermons seek approval in conventional chit-chat and dress themselves up in a set of religious terminologies good only on Sundays, like the hat and veil with which women indicate some formal, special occasion. Words like "Jesus Christ," "salvation," etc.—people today know that you don't talk about things like that any more in daily life. Like the choir and the vestments, they are suitable only in worship services. And it would indeed be strange if in one of our respectable modern churches someone in all seriousness would respond to a sermon with shouts of "Amen" or "Hallelujah!" The fact that such expressions strike us as amusing tells more about our basic attitude than about the present state of what we call King-James-Bible-and-Prayer-Book language. Some author has commented about the Sermon on the Mount that if you don't know it people think you illiterate, but if

you take it seriously people think you mad. A similar status has come to be given to preaching in general.

What is so noticeable is not that the traditional words of the Bible and the prayers we use in church have already become altogether defunct and archaic. No, there are no substitutes for worshipful, devotional terms like "faith," "hope," "love," and many more. We still have to pray after the manner of our Lord: "Our Father, who art in heaven . . . For thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever." These are still words to live by. The whole trouble, it seems to me, is that in *our lives* these words have lost their meaning; we ourselves are not certain what they can mean, not that they really don't mean anything. But some of us on coming to seminary have walked into a new world of meanings in which Amos, Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah, the Psalmists; Jesus, Paul, John; Augustine, Thomas, Luther, Calvin, and a host of historic apostles and fathers, saints and prophets, speak and *live* that way, each adding to the common treasure the rich and fresh meaning he or she has searched, found, and vitalized.

But when we begin to talk religion, religion becomes unreal or academic. We can discuss religion in the classroom without apology because that is what we pay for; we can talk religion in church because we are paid for it. But outside of the academic or the specially designed religious atmosphere, religion can become very embarrassing and inappropriate. No wonder some college boarders more than once thought it funny to have grace before meals even in a seminary refectory, knowing that practice to be actually nothing more than a mere empty observance. When people start to laugh at religion, it behooves us to examine our whole life as professing Christians and ministers-to-be, before we start blaming the rampant secularism outside which has eaten into our college campuses, before we try to go out and "do something" about the world in which God has largely become a mere shadow, like an image that can be turned on and off, can become clear or blurred, straight or crooked on the TV screen.

Many of us are concerned with the appearance of a minister, whether he should look especially pious or not, whether people should see above him a halo, or in front of him a license—"So-and-so, Minister of the Gospel." No, we agree, a seminarian should be considered just as human and sinful as the rest of God's children on the campus. But why bother about how we appear to others, how we should look and talk and behave in their eyes? Can a leopard change his spots? Or, in modern phrase, can one make believe all the time?

The answer lies deep within ourselves. It is useless to talk about



bearing fruits when one is not even rooted. So let us expose ourselves only to the eyes of God, let us not compare one man with another. Whether we are worthy examples among fellow Christians or not is secondary. The primary question is whether we are imitators of Christ, after the fashion of Paul and the saints of the ages. For then and only then can we back up our words by the lives we live. Only then will preaching and any talking about religion be something genuinely convincing instead of something incongruous to others and embarrassing to ourselves. If preaching is, as Phillips Brooks says, "truth through personality," let our training here be more than acquisition of knowledge or homiletic skills but a discipline of our *total being*. Ultimately, the same great preacher remarks, the victory lies with the side with the better character. People will believe in a man not because of his preaching but because of his character.

A convincing evidence of truth and character is *fire*. There is a lack of fire in many a sermon because deep within the preacher there is nothing burning. The fire I mean is not something that flares up and dies as fireworks but a furnace shut up beneath the surface of the earth, which one has to dig thirty miles deep through the hard crust of basalt layers in order to release. "There is in my heart as it were a burning fire," confessed Jeremiah to God, "shut up in my bones" (Jer. 20:9, R.S.V.). With such a fire within the *very being* of him (Moffatt), a prophet cannot but speak out, like the volcano bursting with tons of energy.

We modern students in homiletics need to be reminded of the prophets of the Old Testament. We know a prophet by definition is a spokesman for God, one who is *called* to speak. What we are prone to forget is that this was a calling which a prophet *could not resist*. The sign of a true prophet as distinct from a false one was that when he spoke, he did not do it professionally but out of a sense of vocation. For over and over again, not only in the Old Testament but in the history of the religions of the world, prophecy lost its truth, its character, its fire, when it became a mere matter of profession instead of vocation.

This is why Amos the prophet objected indignantly to Amaziah's insinuation: "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there. . . ." (Amos 7:12ff., R.S.V.). I have nothing to do with such an occupation, said Amos. But "the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.' " God called Ezekiel in much the same way, only more vividly described. "As he spoke," wrote Ezekiel, "the Spirit entered me and made me stand up on my feet. . . . 'Son of man, I am sending you to a rebellious race, . . .

impudent and obstinate that they are, and you must tell them what the Eternal says, whether they will listen or refuse to listen, . . . they shall learn that there is a prophet among them. . . . Tell them what I say, . . . speak my words to them' " (Ezek. 2:1 through 3:11, Moffatt). In the lively translation of Moffatt, Ezekiel continues his story thus: "Then . . . the Spirit picked me up and carried me away; I went away hot and indignant (for the hand of the Eternal pressed hard upon me), and reached the exiles living at Tel-abib by the river Kebar. There I sat for seven days among them, overwhelmed" (Ezek. 3:12-16). "You *must* tell them," said the Lord. The message of the Lord is an urgent one, for modern men no less than for the exiles for Judah. "I went away *hot* and *indignant*, *overwhelmed*." The Revised Standard Version has it—"And I went in bitterness and in the heat of my spirit."

It is not only true prophecy that requires heat. True writing, defines Christopher Morley, is that which can "set fire to that damp sponge called the brain." "Poetry," says another writer, "comes from anger, hunger, and dismay." A good preacher is one with "a fire in his belly." "What a preacher brings to people," concludes Halford E. Luccock, "is a *personal intensity* which results from being *possessed* by a Person and a gospel, an available reserve of *sheer intensity* of perception and emotion."<sup>1</sup>

Why, then, don't we have any fire in our belly? Is it because we are too familiar with Christianity? A syndicated cartoon by Simms Campbell some time ago applies to ministers as well. At a cocktail party, two girls were starting to gossip about a rich young executive surrounded at the other end of the parlor by a group of girls. The one said to the other, "I just know him well enough to talk about him." That, it seems to me, is the great danger of preaching, the danger of familiarity—knowing Jesus Christ just well enough to preach about him. "If you can, do it," said a wit with great insight, "if you cannot, teach it." Many Christian preachers and teachers come so near to Christianity; the gospel is so accessible. Let us beware lest we, preaching all the time at its gate, never enter the Kingdom.

Together with a lack of fire we find a lack of *conviction*. It is seldom that we hear of someone going into the ministry simply because he cannot help it; instead, we hear a great deal of rationalization or sentiment revolving around the act of choice. We have to justify our coming to the seminary, make it appear likable to ourselves and reasonable to others. This is a far cry from the great prophets, and from Paul, who in irreducible terms exclaimed, "For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach

<sup>1</sup> Luccock, H. E., *In the Minister's Workshop*. The Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1944, p. 30.

the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16, R.S.V.) These were men possessed with a message; whether they were able or not, whether people would listen or not, that was quite secondary.

I think it is unfortunate that people often confuse conviction with pigheadedness. The word *pigheaded* is illuminating. To my people a pig is not a symbol of obstinacy but of stupidity. A pigheaded person is therefore one who is too lazy to think. And here we have the clear distinction between obstinacy and conviction. A Christian with conviction is one who has strong beliefs and knows what they mean, logically and practically. While the one who never bothers to think out his beliefs and insists on remaining as he is, is not only superstitious but truly pigheaded.

A year in an American seminary has been in many ways rewarding. But at times I was greatly puzzled by what many people in it actually believed. Intelligent men and women of our time may be getting tired of a reason that refuses to commit itself to faith; but it is doubtful if they will listen to a minister whose faith is a vague something and whose conviction has no fire. I wouldn't, neither would you. A conviction is an obsession, as is the Kingdom of God to E. Stanley Jones, or the baseball results to a sports fan, or tomorrow's examination to a worrying student. And it is our *main concern* that people notice, unless we bury it successfully under layers of sophistication. Our dominant interest is bound to affect the quality if not actually the content of our preaching.

There is a strange story about a "man of God" in 1 Kings 13. He came up to Bethel and predicted the reform of Josiah which was to come three hundred years later, in which the shrine that Jeroboam had just built would be destroyed. King Jeroboam, furious, raised his hand against the man of God; his hand immediately withered. But the Lord restored it at the intercession of the man of God. Jeroboam wanted to reward him, but he answered that the Lord had commanded him not to eat or drink in Israel, nor retrace his route by which he came.

At Bethel there was an old prophet who heard of this marvelous man. He quickly saddled his ass and caught up with the man of God returning by another road. "Come home with me and eat bread," he offered the man. Again the man declined the invitation, explaining why. "I also am a prophet as you are," said the prophet, "and an angel spoke to me by the word of the Lord, saying, 'Bring him back with you into your house that he may eat bread and drink water.'" Never suspecting that a prophet could lie in the name of God, and most likely physically exhausted, the man of God finally changed his mind and followed the old prophet home.

A strange thing happened in the midst of the dinner. The host suddenly stood up and prophesied against the guest he so eagerly brought back: "Because you have disobeyed the word of the Lord, and have not kept the commandment which the Lord your God commanded you, but have come back, and have eaten bread and drunk water . . . your body shall not come to the tomb of your fathers." After that the man of God proceeded home. A lion met him on the way. His body was buried by the old prophet, who instructed that when he himself died he should be buried at the same spot.

A careful reading of the story, as Prof. H. H. Rowley ably points out, will show its emphasis on the meaning of true prophecy. According to the storyteller, it is a matter of obedience and inner certainty. The man of God forfeited his life because he had abandoned his own conviction at the word of another man, even though this other "prophet" claimed to have the word of God.<sup>2</sup>

For how could the Lord use such a messenger when he needs men who can stand on their own conviction against all opposition and persuasion from different sides, men like Micaiah, for contrast? "Speak favorably," King Ahab's servant tried to warn Micaiah as he was brought to prophesy before the King, to whom four hundred other "prophets" had promised victory in a contemplated battle. "As the Lord lives," retorted Micaiah, "what the Lord says to me, that I will speak" (1 Kings 22:13ff.). He said it, and he suffered for it. We never know what happened to men like him. But without a Micaiah, an Amos, a Jeremiah, an Ezekiel, our pulpit today will not amount to much.

The genuineness of our call to preach, as my bishop once advised me, is a matter strictly between God and ourselves. No one is going to make the decision and say the word for another. But if we do, let us from time to time dig deep and search our souls. In conclusion, let us examine our preaching with the following questions in mind:

1. What difference does my preaching make in the lives of people—what difference does it make in me?
2. Do I take the word of God so seriously that I not only speak it out of constraint and compassion but *live* it, as if it burned in the core of my very being?
3. Do my conviction as well as my character back up every sermon I preach, or are they just as inconsequential?

<sup>2</sup> Rowley, H. H., "The Nature of Prophecy in the Light of Recent Study," *Harvard Theological Journal*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 1 (Jan. 1945), pp. 34ff.

# Time and the Christian

WINSTON L. KING

TWO CONTRASTING but complementary strands of thought about the value of man's mortal life run through the Bible from one end to the other. The resulting tension in Judeo-Christian thought has been one of its most vital and important characteristics. It is to the examination of the nature and significance of this tension that we turn in this discussion.

## I

The Old Testament gives frequent and poignant expression to one of these contrasting elements in some of its most eloquent passages. Their theme is the *shortness* and *frailty* of human life. Who can forget the humbling query found in the eighth Psalm?

When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,  
the moon and the stars which thou hast established;  
what is man that thou art mindful of him,  
and the son of man that thou dost care for him? <sup>1</sup>

Or those majestic words of the ninetieth Psalm:

For all our days pass away under thy wrath,  
our years come to an end like a sigh.  
The years of our life are threescore and ten,  
or even by reason of strength fourscore;  
Yet their span is but toil and trouble;  
they are soon gone, and we fly away.

Or once again the lament of Job:

My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,  
and come to their end without hope.  
Remember that my life is a breath; . . .  
As the cloud fades and vanishes,  
so he who goes down to Sheol does not come up;  
he returns no more to his house,  
nor does his place know him any more. (7:6, 7, 9, 10)

---

<sup>1</sup> All Bible quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.

---

WINSTON L. KING, B.D., S.T.M., Ph.D., is Dean of the Chapel and Professor of Philosophy and Religion at Grinnell College, Iowa. He examines in this article the various attitudes toward time and mortal life in Judeo-Christian thinking.



Such passages might be multiplied many times over. And their combined logic would *seem* to be that a life which is both fleeting and frail is relatively worthless. Yet, strangely enough on the face of it, the pessimistic denial of the worth of life, so familiar in the *Rubaiyat*, seldom appears in the Old Testament. In the depths of his pessimism, Job sometimes inclines in this direction; and Ecclesiastes is, of course, almost a biblical *Rubaiyat*. Yet these exceptions but prove the rule; for the vast majority of the Old Testament writers and the continuing tradition of Judaism united in proclaiming that "life is real, life is earnest" and this without any compensatory hope of a life to come after death.

Now the reason for this seemingly contradictory conclusion is not that the Old Testament counsels a frantic, disillusioned attempt to squeeze the most enjoyment out of every passing moment because "one is dead for a long time." On the contrary, it esteems life highly because *the visible world, including man's life in it, is the arena of God's action*. For God created the world and all its inhabitants, and he sustains it in power and beauty—even Job especially insists upon this. The stuff of human history is real because it is the vital concern of the Creator and in its struggles he works out his divine purposes. Therefore short-lived, ephemeral man is an active participant in the processes of reality; what he experiences in life, however brief and feeble that experience may be, is a genuine experience of ultimate reality. One can say that he who obeys God is a fellow worker with him, though this exact phrasing would perhaps have seemed blasphemous to the Hebrew.

In passing we may observe that this second strand is in great contrast to both Far-Eastern and Greek religious thought. The former tends to consider space-time existence as somewhat illusory and its concerns spiritually frustrating. The cure of history is to escape it by spiritual detachment. Greek thought tended to conceive of history as moving in repetitive and essentially meaningless cycles and, in Aristotle, to see God as primarily concerned in the contemplation of his own eternal perfection. An interested concern in the messy relativities of history would have been beneath his contempt.

## II

This double sense of the shortness, yet the divine worth, of human life is both intensified and altered in the New Testament.

New Testament writers are fully conscious of the mortal shortness of human life and do not hesitate to speak of it. Indeed, it is assumed throughout. Still further: the shortness of the individual's life is dramati-

cally highlighted and intensified by a kind of cosmic shortness of breath. The sands of world-time are running out; the end of the age is at hand, so imminently at hand that many an individual life may well be cut short by its arrival.

Without entering into the whole tortured question of eschatological interpretations, now swinging back from the Schweitzerian extreme of a thoroughgoing application of apocalyptic to every page of the New Testament, let me here take the incontrovertible ground that there is *some* expectation of a *rather* immediate culmination of world affairs to be found at many points in the New Testament. Whatever Jesus meant by saying that the Kingdom of Heaven was "at hand," whoever wrote the apocalyptic chapters in the Gospels, a feeling of great and imminent happenings permeates Jesus' teaching in the form in which we have received it. And certainly Paul, at one stage of his life, expected the Parousia before his own death. Also the writers of 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation strenuously seek to implant the conviction in the minds of their readers that the "last days" are upon the world. In short, whatever variety of eschatology we espouse, it can be said that the prevailing New Testament temper with regard to time is well expressed in these words of Paul:

... it is full time now for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand.

(Romans 13:11b-12a)

Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

(2 Cor. 6:2b)

Life then in the New Testament is doubly short, both individually and cosmically. But this has resulted in the immeasurable increase of the worth of every moment remaining to us. For not only does the New Testament affirm the Old Testament conviction that God works his purposes in human history; it is fully convinced that God is *especially* working in its *particular* period of world history. The "fullness of time" has arrived. Long foretold events (the coming of the Messiah and his resurrection in power) have already occurred; the new age, in some sense begun by these events, is upon this generation. Soon the world will see the full fruition of God's eternal purposes. Therefore every moment is fraught with tremendous possibility and every deed carries with it an unbelievable weight of weal or woe for the doer.

We must add one more element to this already unbearable intensity: the hope of immortality. Late and peripheral in the Old Testament, it is

central here. Dubious as to moral quality there (distinctionless Sheol), it is here divided into angelic Heaven and demonic Hell. Thus even more did the weight of eternal significance come to press upon every day, hour, and moment of the Christian's life. The Old Testament pyramid of life, which gradually tapered off from the broad base of vigorous youthful years into declining powers and ultimate nothingness, is here inverted so that the whole burden of infinite eternity and catastrophic world change rests upon the few years of mortal life and makes them infinitely precious to the individual.

### III

This terrific tension within the Christian faith, between the temporal and the eternal, has had a varied career in its subsequent life and thought, and suffered some sea changes on the way. Yet for all those changes, and many lopsided expressions in which the central tension has almost entirely been lost, its dynamism has in fact never completely disappeared. It seems to be integral to Christianity in all its forms.

There was the medieval entrancement with heaven, for example. For devout medieval Christians *this* life was only a vestibule to the next. Those who were able and willing retired from this world in large numbers to contemplate the glories of the next and to prepare themselves for it. Those who were unable or unwilling to achieve solitude and visions sometimes contrived to enjoy fleeting vestibule delights with a good bit of gusto, though often with guilty consciences as well. But together, in the full light of heaven *and* earth, worldly and unworldly Christians contrived lastingly to beautify the earth with some of the world's noblest architecture and art.

And there was the Puritan, ambiguous in his relation to the world. With an in-the-world austerity which matched the monkish out-of-this-world discipline at many points, the Puritan also matched, or even more than matched, the medieval disenchantment with this world. Not only did he distrust it but sometimes he savagely derided it, as witness the following verses:

Vain, frail, short-liv'd and miserable Man;  
Learn what thou art when thine estate is best:  
A restless Wave o' th' troubled Ocean,  
A dream, a lifeless Picture finely drest.  
  
A wind, a Flower, a Vapour, and a Bubble, . . .  
A rolling Stone, dry Dust, light Chaff, and Stubble,  
A Shadow of Something, but nought indeed.

Learn what deceitful Toyes, and empty things,  
This World, and all its best Enjoyments bee:  
Out of the Earth no true Contentment springs,  
But all things here are vexing Vanitee.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, on the other hand, who was more careful of the fleeting hours spent in this fleeting world than the Puritan? Diaries telling of his strenuous effort to use his time for both solid earthly work and eternal gain are numerous. Jeremy Taylor well expresses the Puritan care for time in the opening pages of his *Holy Living*, and sums up the matter in these words:

... for he that spends his time in sports, and calls it recreation, is like him whose garment is made of fringes, and his meat nothing but sauces; they are healthless, chargeable, and useless.<sup>3</sup>

... in these and all other actions of our lives we stand always before God . . . ; it will concern us to behave ourselves carefully, as in the presence of our judge.<sup>4</sup>

John Wesley, though living a century later and not a Puritan, was deeply influenced by Taylor all his life long, and gives expression to Taylor's theme in his hymn:

A charge to keep I have,  
A God to glorify,  
A never-dying soul to save,  
And fit it for the sky.

Arm me with jealous care,  
As in Thy sight to live,  
And O, Thy servant, Lord, prepare  
A strict account to give.

That specific factor in New Testament thought which so intensified the early Christian awareness of time—that is, the prospect of Christ's Second Coming—has wound in and out among other strands of Christian thought and life in a quite unpredictable manner. Its *obvious* force in the main-line tradition of the Church was lost after a generation or two of futile waiting for its occurrence, while the Church turned its energies toward gaining power in Europe. Yet it was constantly reappearing in strange and sometimes violent manifestations, like an underground river bursting out onto the surface for a time.

<sup>2</sup> From Michael Wigglesworth's "A Song of Emptiness," quoted by Miller and Johnson in *The Puritans*, American Book Co., 1938, p. 608.

<sup>3</sup> Chap. I, sect. I, numbered par. 16.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, introduction to Chap. I, par. 3.

In pre-Reformation and Reformation extravagances, in strangely enthusiastic manifestations among the sober Puritans, and in the quest for the Perfect Society in England and the United States, it indicated that its force was by no means spent. Nor does it lack modern representatives even in prosperous, optimistic America; and in recently devastated Europe there is an astonishingly strong resurgence of Adventist interest and hope—witness Evanston!

Yet on the whole, despite Evanston and the negative eschatology imposed on us all by the prospect of the H-bomb, the force of the hope of a Second Coming is rather largely spent among Christians today. Certainly only a small minority would subscribe to the following statement, from an Adventist source: "Jesus Christ, who was born of the Virgin Mary and who ascended to heaven 1900 years ago, will return literally and personally in the clouds of heaven, with a great multitude of angels." And what those who still "believe" in a Second Coming, but not in this form, would put in its place is exceedingly vague.

#### IV

What, then, for us? If the visible Advent is no longer a living article of faith for most of the church, neither are these other historical expressions of the time-eternity tension acceptable, at least as they stand. We can be neither so remorseless in our hatred of this world nor so covetously careful of its fleeting moments as the Puritan. Save for a very few very unworldly saints, contemplation of the glories of the New Jerusalem is not our supreme forte. Nor does the revivalist exhortation, "Prepare to meet thy God," strike our ears with the same drastically convincing force as it once did.

One basic feature of our heritage we can still retain without much difficulty: a vivid sense of the *briefness* of our years and the frailty of our hold upon them. Medical science, to be sure, has cured many diseases and raised life expectancy in the United States to nearly sixty years. Yet sixty is an appreciable distance from infinity; and anyone over thirty, or any who has felt the touch of illness in his body, knows within himself how truly man is made of dust. Such basic humility is easy to maintain, if we exert but a mustard-seed quantity of imagination.

But immediately we must urge that this shortness of life is no *mere* shortness, in at least two ways. One is rooted in the nature of human consciousness, and the other is specifically religious. The first of these



elements is the knowledge that life has an end. This is humanity's unique possession. Not even one's most intelligent pet or the chimpanzee best outfitted with human tricks *knows* that he is mortal or can contemplate the fact, despite his instinctive fear of physical danger. But man does—to his own dismay and terror.

Yet in the very heart of this poignant sense of mortality is the seat of man's power over his own life. His sense of mortality is part and parcel of his power to survey somewhat detachedly his own life, past, present, and future. He is not completely at the mercy of his past deeds or present instincts, as is the animal. To use an analogy, man stands upon the bridge of a ship (his moment of present consciousness, his *nowness*), which gives him some stability and a perspective out over the driving tide of events in time. Or to change the figure, he is a weaver into whose hands are fed the strands of the raw materials of his existence. In the moment of awareness which he calls "now," he is able to weave his own design; for then and then only are time and history fluid in his hands.

This should give us some sense of the unique preciousness of each of our fleeting days. These moments of *nowness* which are in our possession as human beings are the only way in which time, whether threescore and ten years or less, will ever come to us. We shall never have more or other hold upon time than this; unless we deal faithfully with these momentary *nows*, we shall betray the worth of the past and destroy the goodness of the future. In short, *now* is indeed the day of salvation; it is a magic time, full of creative possibility, each momentary *now* presenting itself but once for our use. Such a realization is surely akin to that earnest carefulness of the Puritan. But it may perhaps be blended fruitfully with something he lacked—a vivid sense of the variety of gifts which differing hours may bring, a principle of healthful rhythm and enriching contrast given us by our greater awareness of the beauties and worth of *this* world.

Another facet of the precious, magical power of *nowness* is to be observed in the Christian doctrine of forgiveness. To forgive one's fellow man is to use the power of the still-fluid present to wipe out the past and change the future. When one man says to another, "I forgive you for yesterday's loveless action toward me," he also says in effect: "So far as I am concerned, *that* part of the past shall be as though it had not ever been. You and I will act today, tomorrow, and forever as though there had *been* no yesterday's evil deed." Thus in forgiveness one moves from contemplative pseudo-superiority to time into its active mastery. By means

of a change in the forgiver, the future is changed into something better from what it would have been without his forgiveness.

## V

Yet this is not the Christian fullness of the matter. We have largely left out of our consideration thus far, what is by all odds the most important factor for the Christian in the whole temporal situation, namely, *God*. And this would be a fatal omission. For the Bible indeed never proposes that we shall regard either the span of our lives, the use of our time, or the possibility of forgiveness in any other light than that of his presence and power.

Thus the Old Testament, with all its emphasis upon the brevity of human years, seldom considers this temporal shortness as a mere fact, apart and alone, or spends much time in lamenting the frailty of human life *per se*. It is before the face of God that human life is like the grass that withers away in the evening and all our years are as a tale that is told. Even where this divine perspective is not specifically pointed out, one can feel it breathing through the atmosphere, always implied if not spoken.

It should be noted in passing that without a profound sense of passing one's days in the presence of God, that careful use of time suggested by Taylor and Wesley becomes a kind of avariciousness and cold calculation which can never give itself away in faith or love; a cool thriftiness like that of Franklin or a soulless economic power-drive so characteristic of decadent Calvinism—as different from a devout religious dedication of all one's powers to God's service as self-righteousness is from true righteousness.

The same divine context is to be noted in the matter of forgiveness. The New Testament never considers human forgiveness by itself but as growing out of the prior and greater divine forgiveness. Jesus puts it in mathematical terms: The master (God) forgives the servant (man) a debt 500,000 times as great as the latter does in extending forgiveness to his fellow servant—an incommensurable ratio. This, Jesus would imply, is the true measure of man's dependence upon God, for only as God thus generously and overwhelmingly forgives him, can he forgive his fellow. And to this we must agree; for if we are to be enabled to wipe out or alter the smallest fragment of the effects of the past (as we seek to do in forgiveness) we must have, not only a certain permissive loose-jointedness in the universe as its negative condition, but the positive support and co-operation of the universe as well. Nothing less than this will do to make

of forgiveness a genuine reality; such is the meaning of the term "the grace of God."

The 500,000-to-1 ratio is also the measure of man's containment in God, both with regard to the temporal span of his life and with regard to his mastery of time. Only as he is contained and supported by God can his few years be lifted into significance. Yet it is most important to the Christian to know the *manner* of his containment in God, even more than the fact. It may not be enough to say with Paul (after the Greeks) simply that "in Him we live and move and have our being." True, no doubt, but not true enough. With only this much, Christianity is not distinguishable from pantheism, either ancient or modern. For pantheism's cardinal teaching is also the inclusion of man, along with all creation, in God. God is the largest of all the circles that we can draw and therefore contains everything else. All Being is God, and God is All Being. Man rejoicing and participating in the world, in whatever way, thus rejoices and participates in God—a *positive* pantheism, so to speak.

Or sometimes this pantheistic inclusion is expressed in a more inward fashion. God is in all things equally, but in some things more equally. The spirit of man, when purified of dross by self-discipline, is discovered to be identical in substance and nature with God. Salvation comes to a man when he discovers that he (this inward he) is indeed the One God—and to those who thus find him, God is All. But the process by which he attains to oneness with the One is that of the denial of the reality of the world of time and space outside the self, and negation of the significance of the physical and personal in the timeless trance—a *negative* pantheism.

Now Christian containment in God can follow neither an extraverted (or positive) pantheism which affirms all times and seasons equally, nor an introverted (or negative) pantheism which denies essential worth to all time. Augustine's view of time set forth in Book XI (paragraph 16) of his *Confessions* can be followed much more safely and Christianly. He speaks of God's relation to time thus:

But thou predest all things past, by the sublimity of an ever-present eternity; and surpaskest all future because they are future, and when they come, they shall be past. (But) Thy years neither come nor go. . . . Thy years are one day; and Thy day is not daily, but To-day, seeing Thy To-day gives not place unto to-morrow, for neither doth it replace yesterday. Thy To-day is Eternity.<sup>5</sup>

In a word, *time and the temporal world are within God, not God*

<sup>5</sup> Pusey translation, Everyman Edition, E. P. Dutton and Co.

*within time*, just as, in a lesser sense, the experience of time (duration), is within our human minds rather than in the physical world itself. This mode of the inclusion of time within God has doubtless caught the essence of the Hebrew-Christian subordination of the world and its structure to God, as being created by him, contained in him, and altogether dependent upon him. (Perhaps what Karl Heim terms the destruction of belief in absolute space and time in modern science fits rather easily into this conception; certainly it does not seem to make it any more unlikely.) Thus and thus only does Christianity escape the danger of identifying the world with God and making him subject to its time and change.

Yet, on the other hand, it must not be construed as meaning that the created world and its time are utterly other than God, completely accidental or peripheral to his being, or that God's eternity is totally unrelated to man's time. For equally central in Christian belief with the conviction of the world's containment in God, is the conviction of its reality, worth, and goodness. This is expressed in the Genesis statement that God found the world he created—a world and its creatures, all alike in time—to be very good; and in the continued sense, that he finds it a fitting theater for the working out of his purposes.

A well-balanced statement of the subordinate but genuine reality of time, which catches the fundamental insight of Augustine and suitably qualifies it, came out of Evanston:

Time is our name for one order of the living relationships in which his presence and his acts are known to us and bear on our lives. Time thus understood is neither illusory nor merely abstract or ideal. It is as concrete and actual as anything in the physical world. But it has no independent reality apart from the living God. . . .

Past, present and future are not separable segments of an endlessly outstretched line, a kind of space to be filled, but dimensions and directions within the living interaction of God and man. The future is not a kind of inverted past, nor an endless repetition of "tomorrow," but the homing of our unfinished lives to the One who gives them direction, meaning, and fundamental security. He is the one who comes to us at every moment, yet who lives and promises that we can live beyond the limits of earthly time and space.<sup>6</sup>

Three implications seem to flow from this distinctively Christian view of time. First, that our inclusion in and dependence on God is both a judgment and a blessing. Recognition of judgmental inclusion avoids the danger of promiscuously affirming, with extravert pantheism, the whole world, with all its times and seasons. This would be to declare all things

<sup>6</sup> Calhoun, R., "Christ—the Hope of the World," *The Christian Century*, Aug. 25, 1954, p. 1005f.

holy, an affirmation at which Christianity has always boggled. Rather it would affirm that there are at least *gradations* and *degrees* in which the created world participates in God, that some should be affirmed more than others. Likewise this view avoids the negative pantheistic denial of essential worth to the creatures of time and space in the affirmation of the sole reality of mystical experience. Christianity, when in its right mind, will never do this. The Christian's reaction to his environment is that of a continuously selective response to its varied elements in the light of his best understanding of God's will. He does not expect on the one hand that his every deed, in becoming a part of cosmic reality by being done, is thereby good just because it is a part of what is. God does not guarantee and support man's every act. On the other hand, neither does he evade deeds in time for fear they be foreign to God and thereby unholy. For, after all, time is in and of God, even though less than he; it has been and is blessed by his action. It is in time that God creates.

This leads to a second implication. The Christian, working selectively according to his best insights into the will of God, not only may, but *ought* to affirm his faith in time (under God) by vigorous historical action. He must give of his best to temporal deeds, for the genius of Christianity is forever separate from those faiths which emphasize the essential unworth and unreality of the world of time and space. It does not seek to transcend time by entering into time-denying timelessness; nor to "rise above" time by withdrawing from it; but to transvalue time and its deeds by creatively relating them in time to the will of the eternal God. This does not mean life lived at a dead religious run or reduced to an emotional monochrome of holy seriousness, but a variety in holiness which has room for the great and the small, the enduring and transient, in its dedication of all, even eating and drinking, to the glory of God—and thereby brings them to their fullest expression.

A third and last implication. If we are to hold fast the fullness of this Christian view of time, with all its internal tensions adequately balanced, we must not separate it from God's eternity. Dependence of man and his temporal values upon God, though to be insisted on, does not mean their abolition in him. Thus the expression "and time shall be no more"<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> This expression occurs in Rev. 10:6 (A.V.). In the hymn, "When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder" it is obviously taken to mean the final disappearance of time into eternity, and so perhaps in some theological discussions also. However, according to R.S.V. the verse *should* read, "And the angel . . . swore . . . that there should be no more delay" before the mystery of God should be fulfilled on the earth—a quite different meaning from the above.



should be treated with caution, for it smacks of the mystical and absolutist dissolution of time and all its works into something wholly other. Granted that time is in God, with all its works; that God's being as such cannot be fully understood in time relationships. Yet to make our earthly lives of essential worth, eternity—God's eternity wherein man will ultimately dwell—must "affirm the conception of an hour" and catch up in itself the best and holiest of all that we have done and are become. In a word, for the Christian, eternity is not the destruction of what has come to be in time, but its full fruition. Eternity is the preservation and enhancement of that new truth, beauty, and goodness which could only be brought into being in time.

# Evangelical Christianity and Social Concern

D. IVAN DYKSTRA

ONE OF THE DISTINCTIVE characteristics of twentieth-century American Christianity is the degree of its concern with social and political issues. Christians have been concerned before, but it is safe to say that there have seldom been times when this concern has been so deep or so widely felt. We need not be long delayed by attempts at explaining this phenomenon. It may be partly due to a rereading of the Bible, and particularly a renewal of acquaintance with the prophetic tradition of the Bible; partly to a competition which is offered to Christianity by secular agencies of human concern; partly to a greater awareness of the seriousness of questions of social and political order and an accompanying reluctance to acquiesce in the evils of our time; and partly to a wider contact between churches, which has made possible a leavening of the whole church by those intense minority groups of Christians who have caught visions of a brighter world.

There are two factors in the contemporary situation which urge us to look once more at the bases of a program of Christian witness in social affairs, and specifically in relation to questions of world order. The first is the temptation for Christians to forget to talk like Christians when they get down to discussions of such questions, so that it is sometimes difficult to discern the differences between a Christian-oriented and a secular-oriented discussion. The second is a persistent worry on the part of Christians, lest in engaging in this kind of witness they may be violating their calling as Christians by attaching Christian labels to something that is not authentically Christian. Neither the temptation nor the worry are imaginary. They arise wherever Christians engage in a serious attempt to fulfill their commissions. They were present in full force at the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Evanston.

By so much as these are present, the question concerning the bases for

---

D. IVAN DYKSTRA, Ph.D., Th.D., is Professor of Philosophy at Hope College, Holland, Michigan. His article is a revision for *RELIGION IN LIFE* readers, of an address delivered at the meeting of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, in June, 1954.

Christian witness in relation to world order remains a live one. The question of the Christian sanction for such concern cannot be laid lightly aside; it must be constantly examined in order that we may retain our perspectives on the real dimensions of our Christian task. It is a matter of great concern to every Christian to learn whether international affairs are "posted property" as far as Christians are concerned; or a fringe area with which Christian churches are permitted to be concerned, if they so choose, in some casual and random fashion; or whether this concern lies indeed much closer to the heart of the Christian commission. No Christian can or will or should work very hard at anything unless he can do so in faith that his acting is within the context of God's purposes for his church.

# I

In thinking about the question of the basis for Christian witness in international affairs, no casual reasons or quick rationalizations will do. It simply is not enough to know that certain secretaries are appointed by their churches to engage in this task; a prior question is whether a church's commissioning of this work has a higher warrant than its own commissioning act. Nor is it enough to know that this kind of action has been going on for many years, no matter how proud we may be of the church's record of concern; we need a clear directive that this tradition is to be continued, and we need it even more because the church's witness in relation to international affairs promises to become not simpler or easier but more complex and possibly more dangerous in the next decade. Nor can we regard it as sufficient to know that by engaging in such action a church is following the mode of other churches who engage in such action, too; a church which knows no better sanctions than imitation of others becomes, I suppose, an imitation church. In the absence of a certainty that this witness has better foundations than any of these I have suggested, our thinking and acting will lack that sense of purposiveness and confidence which is the prerequisite for effectiveness.

The challenging witness of church history is that where the church's commission has been sure, no difficulty has seemed to be too great. In the last analysis, the successes of the church have been won, not under the lure of this or that more or less incidental reward; the church's power has simply been her knowledge that she was about the business of her Lord. Of this much, at least, we can be sure: that our witness and action in international affairs has an authentically Christian warrant, or no real warrant at all.

Along with this preliminary certainty, we hold to a second one. That

is that this question of the authentication of the Christian witness is not a question for just a few; it is a question that belongs to the entire church. It is not enough for a few members with special appointments to know that they are doing Christ's work; the church must know it, too. Social-action secretariats cannot tolerate the burden of wondering whether they have the solid backing of the church. They do not wish to exist as a simply tolerated group. Their work has a legitimacy to the extent that it becomes only a focal point for a much larger activity: the activity of the whole church as it bears witness to its faith in relation to problems of world order. Church pronouncements are suspect, and in fact they are near-deceptions, if they do not represent the considered convictions, not of a handful of ecclesiasts but of the church at large. This is either the *church* in action in this particular area or it is nothing, either the channeling of the whole church's witness or no witness at all. Here, stepchild status means no status at all. Of all institutions, the church should be the least willing to practice the deception of paying lip service by assigning to a few specialists what it lacks the will to do itself; hence the church's soul-searching as it faces the big question whether or not world order is really Christian business.

## II

It occurs to me that, in facing up to our question, we have a habit of beginning at the wrong place. We frequently begin with the assumption that the church and her people are not concerned about world order and need to be aroused to concern. We have a way of assuming that people who preach the gospel of Jesus Christ are reluctant to be concerned, so that the burden of proof lies with those who *are* concerned. We sometimes approach our task with the tacit assumption that we are here in the position of salesmen who must sell Christians something they do not wish to buy. Sometimes those with this kind of concern have allowed themselves to move in an atmosphere almost of conspiracy, as if they were dangerous men who, in talking about the Christian witness for world order, were plotting something sinister against the interests and wishes of the church; or as if Christian people as a rule were disposed to warmongering and they, only they, were left to tend the flickering candle of concern.

In retrospect, the assumption seems incredible. For if I read the mind of Christian people correctly, they simply are not like that. What a fantastic assumption it is, that Christian people need to be tricked or browbeaten or dragged into a feeling of concern! The Christian people I know are compassionate people, with a profound sympathy for man in his desperation,

no matter what form that desperation may take. They thrill to Isaiah's vision of swords beaten into plowshares, and the lamb and the lion lying down together, and to the angels' song at Christmastide. They do not need to be argued into being compassionate or into longing for the establishment of the kind of world order in which men may live in justice and love and without fear. In these days at least, not many people like war any more and Christians like it least of all.

### III

Our problem, it is clear, is not to persuade Christians; as Christians they are persuaded already. Our problem is rather to release the Christian concern from certain inhibitions which, all unaware, have imposed themselves upon it. There is nothing mysterious and perhaps nothing sinister about those inhibitions. They are the result, in the main, not of malicious plotting, but of confusions such as can readily befall even honest men, even when they are trying very hard to be faithful ministers of the Christian gospel. These confusions we need to face very honestly. But they need to be faced very seriously, too, for they are responsible for the strange paradox which Christianity sometimes becomes: among the religions of the world Christianity is pre-eminently the religion of the God who is infinite in his compassion, and yet in the name of Christianity some Christians have sometimes resisted programs which sought to express and actualize that compassion.

I should like to address attention briefly to three such confusions or misapprehensions. In identifying them, I shall hope at the same time to be making plain a Christian credo and clarifying the assumptions which underlie something like a Christian's witness in international affairs. I know of no more adequate way of identifying these confusions than by a sequence of three very elementary questions: (1) Who acts? (2) What is to be done? and (3) By what means?

(1) *The first question* is, "Who acts?" That is to say, in our specific context, who is it that builds a better world order? Or more broadly, is this man's business or God's?

For any Christian fellowship, and particularly for an evangelical Christian fellowship with a strong tradition of God-centeredness, the answer will be so obvious that the question will appear to have been loaded. But let us get this straight and keep it straight. And let us reaffirm it here as something more than a little tradition born in the whim of a radically austere anti-humanist reaction. The core of our faith, let us remind our-



selves, is not shaped by the forces of anti-humanist reaction. I refer to this faith that it is finally God who rules his world and shapes its destiny. It is he who creates, upholds, provides, governs, redeems, and at the last brings to fruition. The point need not be belabored, for on this at least we are agreed as the big postulate of our faith. The preaching of this kind of doctrine is for us our title to existence as a Christian church.

There is really no more to say about this item of our belief, except to urge that we hold it firmly and without apology. Let this be still the anchor-point of our life as a church. Let it be more than a dead letter in a book or a ritual phrase in our sermons, or what is worse, a tool of schismatic controversy. Let it be instead a living faith which holds us securely as we make our way through the mazes of contemporary disorder, wondering what to do and what to hope. Let us hold to this as a living alternative to a glib expectation that we could bring in the Kingdom's fruition at any time we chose, simply by taking matters into our own hands—an expectation which quickly ends either in chaos because, having made the Kingdom purely *our* domain, we cannot decide what kind of Kingdom we would like, or in bewilderment, because, having imagined we could have it at any time we wanted to and finding that we cannot, we lose our heads. This, I take it, is the proud postulate of our faith as Christians: that the Kingdom is God's business.

It is what we do *after* that postulate of our faith that brings us into confusion. What does that postulate mean for human life?

The easy inference that we draw is that since the Kingdom is God's business, then it is God's business, not ours. If God is going to realize his Kingdom, so we reason, he will realize it quite regardless of anything we do or do not do. In fact, the best thing we can do is to get entirely out of the way by making ourselves as insignificant as we can. If it is God's business, we suppose, we only interfere with him by being even so much as interested in its realization. The way to honor God, we conclude, is to approximate as closely as we can to nothingness. By that reasoning, he best serves God who does the least, God loves a man in proportion to the extent to which he becomes a nonentity, and a crawling obsequiousness becomes the supreme virtue. Our logic is very simple—but also very bad. We begin with the false dilemma that the Kingdom is either God's business or ours, and then badly conclude that if it is God's, it cannot be ours, and if we make it ours, it can no longer be God's.

I really do not see why we must make matters so complicated. Why did we ever allow ourselves to be maneuvered into the dilemma which

supposes that the only two alternatives open to man are secular humanism or evangelical quietism? When will we recover our Christian balance sufficiently to know that it is little gain to counter the sin of humanism by falling into the sin of quietism? Or when will we stop cowering at the mere mention of that horrible word "activist"? Or again, and more fundamentally, when will we biblical Christians begin to be determined, not by some near-pathological fear of humanist extravagance but by the biblical imperative for Christian living and acting? And when will we stop sanctifying our sometime indifference with the guises of devotion?

The Bible knows nothing of this either-or—of the notion that the Kingdom is either God's concern or ours but cannot be both. The Bible speaks in terms of a both-and, or, better still, a because-therefore. Because God works, God's men work; because God is concerned for men, God's men are concerned; because the Kingdom is God's will, it is the will of those whose wills are God's.

The Kingdom is not forbidden territory to Christians, nor is it merely permitted to Christians to feel concern for it; this is a Christian's imperative. Being Christian is no superficial, trivial affair; we who are Christian are such because and to the extent that Christ lives in us, and the measure of the extent to which Christ lives in us is the extent to which we dedicate every talent to realizing his will for the world and for men. This, it seems to me, is the first thing we need to get straightened out in our thinking. It is the first item in an elementary Christian creed. And it is the first premise of a Christian witness for world order.

(2) *The second misapprehension* is somewhat similar to the first: it arises from the same inspiration, and it is equally damaging to the growth of a relevant Christianity. It occurs so soon as we move beyond the first premise that the Kingdom of God is the Christian's all-absorbing concern. For then we must also go on to the second question, "What is to be done?" Granted that the objective is the realization of the Kingdom, what is the Kingdom?

One need not delay long with the somewhat astonishing notion, often expressed, that we do not know what the Kingdom is or means. It is a strange doctrine which often comes from those who stand within the faith that God in Christ has made known his will for his world. It is anomalous for a man who stands in the light of that faith to hold to a skepticism concerning the nature of the Kingdom, unless he means only that the Kingdom is somewhere beyond even man's finest dreams and ideals. Except for that qualification, it simply does not become the Christian

always to be hesitating to declare his faith that this or that condition is according to the will of God. In the light of such hesitation, what becomes of our faith in revelation?

But this is not our worst or most frequent confusion at this point. For here, too, we have strangely allowed ourselves to become entangled in a false dilemma. Perhaps it can be best stated as a question: "Is Christianity concerned with men's souls or with their circumstances?"

We shall have no serious difficulty about at least a part of the answer. For if any one thing is certain about Christianity it is that it is a spirit-oriented religion. Its thesis is that man is a living soul and Christianity's concern is at least for the well-being of the soul. Any movement that narrows its concern to include nothing but man's circumstances or his material well-being not only parts company with historic Christianity; it is not competent to meet the human need. For we have discovered that it takes more than good circumstances and things to make a good man, or even a happy one. Christianity ministers, in the spirit of a limitless hope, to nurture in a man that which can endure and will be worthy of enduring, though every outward circumstance should be adverse, and though, as Job put it, "worms shall have destroyed the body." It is not extravagance to argue that when men's vision has been narrowed to the dimension of concern only for things and for the body, they have not succeeded in meeting the needs even of the body. There need be no apology for the Christian postulate that its mission is to "save souls."

It is what we do once we have affirmed that postulate that brings us into confusion and ineptness. For then we have a way of setting soul over against body, insisting that these form some kind of inherent antithesis and that there must be an everlasting rivalry between a genuinely religious mission and a genuinely social one. And what a costly business this becomes! For, granted that antithesis, the "spiritual-minded," instead of ministering to the "spirit," exhaust their energies in validating a "spiritual" ministry against a "social" one, and vice versa; and no one ever wins, because no one will admit that the social by itself is ever adequate or that the social interest is ever illegitimate. I think history will testify to the vast waste, as Christianity has charted a zigzag course of reaction, now against an excessive concern for the "spirit" and then against an over-emphasis on the "social." How much more brilliant Christianity's contribution could have been, or could be in this hour, had we kept a clearer perspective on this point, instead of letting an antisocial corruption of biblical Christianity inspire an antispiritual revolt against Christianity, and

an antispiritual social Christianity drive us to reaction with overstress on a kind of spiritual isolationism!

I do not know why we have become so enamored of the unrealistic, unbiblical idea that we can slice a man down the middle, calling one half "spirit" and the other half "body," and still have a man left. Nor will we ever know why an evangelical, Bible-centered Christianity should have come to a point where its mission is determined less by the explicit Old and New Testament witness concerning the content of God's concern for man, than by the dialectic notion that we can have either a social concern or a religious concern but we cannot have both. Here, too, Christ's simplicity in loving *man* seems on second thought to be so much profounder than our profound and complicated love, which we suppose must be either for this "part" of man or for that "part" but cannot be for both. This is our second confusion, and you do not need me to tell you how tragically we have allowed it to inhibit our Christian intuitions of concern.

3. *Our third confusion* arises about the question of the means for the realization of God's will for the world and for man. I think I am not mistaken in suspecting that at times we have tacitly feared even to discuss such matters as "means" for the realization of God's will, lest our reference to means should compel us to go on to the assumption that, if only we would employ the right *means*, we could promptly produce the Kingdom. That kind of fear is not entirely without foundation, for it is easy to move from talking about these means to thinking of the Kingdom of God as a humanistic achievement. But at this point we do not get very far if we let that fear drive us into a complete impracticality which prevents us from thinking at least that one kind of action will be more conducive to the achievement of the divine purpose than another. To live at all and to be active in any way will involve some consideration of the specific meaning of objectives and of the means for reaching them.

But once having claimed the right and recognized the necessity of speaking of means, we bump into a third confusion and let ourselves become entangled by another apparent dilemma but a false one. During the course of the Christian tradition two such means for the realization of God's will for his world have received recognition; or, for that matter, two such means receive explicit expression in the New Testament. One is evangelism, and the other is "leavening." I am not sure that one could, on the basis of the New Testament, defend the priority of either one over the other.

In speaking of these two means, it is not easy to know what we mean by each, and it may be that part of our confusion arises from the fact that

we do carry these notions along only in a vague sense. Whatever we *do* mean, I think we would agree that what we *should* mean by evangelism is a ministry carried on with the prayer that God will make it the occasion for his conversion of individual people, or their "birth from above," or their turning from the will-to-evil to the will-to-good. The concept identified as "leavening" is more difficult to define. Would it be too far wrong to define it as the "conversion" of all the agencies which shape the life and environment of people, until they conspire together to produce a life and environment that accord with the divine purpose?

Against the background of these two notions, we will have no difficulty in Christian circles in reaching at least an initial certainty: that the task of the church is evangelism. The New Testament surely will leave no room for disagreement on that point. And it is difficult to conceive of any serious basis on which this task should be regarded as unimportant or irrelevant. Our modern world is, I submit, becoming more and more certain that the ultimate issue is the quality of the wills of men, as it passes through one period of frustration after another, each one a fresh disclosure that no real questions are settled until man is converted. Least of all should our time be apologetic for this emphasis on conversion.

But it is difficult to know, once more, by what logic we come to set the ministry of evangelism *against* the ministry of leavening. Here once more the question comes: must it be either the one or the other? or can it not be both? or, better still, *must* it not be both? It is good, of course, that we are on guard against a watered-down version of Christianity which would limit itself to a concern only for the leavening of the agencies which shape human life and environment but which can at best only deal with human material in an external way. But what a vital Christianity ours would be, could we but recover the biblical sense of an interweaving of these two functions, instead of exhausting our energies in debating the merits of evangelism against the merits of social service and vice versa!

These are the issues we need to face. Once these are answered, we shall be free to go about our task of bearing witness in international affairs with that inspiration which they know who live in faith that they are walking in the way of their Lord. They are issues which need to be settled, let me repeat, not merely in the minds of a few folk with special interests, nor merely in the minds of church officialdom, but in the common consciousness of our Christian constituencies. The door is open for a solid and conscientious and uninhibited support for this vital part of the Christian enterprise, in which the human need and the divine imperative meet.



# The Olney Hymns

JOHN H. JOHANSEN

ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FIVE years ago there appeared in England one of the most important early collections of hymns in the Evangelical movement. Published in 1779, it was a collection known as *Olney Hymns*, and was the joint work of two remarkable men: John Newton (1725-1807), and William Cowper (1731-1800). The former was the Pastor of Olney, Bucks, from the name of which place the hymnbook received its title. William Cowper was the friend of Newton, and lay reader at Olney. It was a remarkable friendship, for it would be difficult to find two men whose temperaments and careers present such a complete contrast.

## I

The dramatic story of Newton's life has often been told. Ellerton says of it that it "might have made the groundwork of a story by Defoe." It is indeed worth the attention of an enterprising film producer or dramatist. Newton was the son of a ship merchant who had had in his youth a Jesuit training. His mother died before he was seven. He had only two years at school, and at eleven years of age he was at sea with his father. Then followed some adventurous years. He served on a man-of-war at the compulsion of a press gang; deserted after he had attained midshipman's rank; was punished and reduced to the ranks; fell in with a slave trader at Sierra Leone; escaped from him, and found his way back to England and to marriage, all by the time he was twenty-five years old. "He moved," Routley says, "in the lowest and vilest circles and sank to the depths of vice, and yet there emerges from this stormy story a man who not only commands the affection of any humane soul, but who showed himself then and afterwards capable of the highest Christian graces."<sup>1</sup>

A further word must be said about Newton's experience with slavery. At the age of nineteen, having left the *H.M.S. Harwich*, and a Guinea

---

<sup>1</sup> Routley, Erik, *I'll Praise My Maker*, London: Independent Press, 1951, p. 146.

---

JOHN H. JOHANSEN, S.T.M., is Pastor of Christ Moravian Church, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and Instructor in the Department of Religion at Salem College, in that city. This article is a condensed version of one of four lectures in Hymnology delivered at the Salem College Summer Choir School in June, 1954.

trading vessel, Newton landed on the island of Benanoes, off the West Coast of Africa. He went ashore with a man named Clow, and for fifteen months lived practically as a slave under the domineering and calculating slave dealer. Newton received no wages for his labor, and very soon the terrible climate brought him down with fever. Clow went off on a long trip in search of slaves, and Newton was left behind under the care of the dealer's jealous mistress. His ordeal is best told in his own words:

As I did not recover very soon, she grew weary and entirely neglected me. I had sometimes not a little difficulty to procure a draught of cold water when burning with a fever. My bed was a mat spread upon a board or chest, and a log of wood my pillow. When my fever left me, and my appetite returned, I would gladly have eaten, but there was no-one gave unto me.<sup>2</sup>

When Clow returned, Newton complained of ill usage, but the trader accepted the mistress's version that Newton was lazy and had been unwilling to work. So Newton continued to work on Clow's plantation; work which no white man in Africa would do willingly. "He was indeed," says his biographer, "as much a slave as any negro; save that Clow knew he had no legal right to treat him thus, and, sooner or later, would have to let him go."<sup>3</sup>

In February, 1747, the opportunity for escape came. A ship named *The Greyhound*, owned by Joseph Manesty, a friend of Newton's father, put in at the island. Within an hour Newton had abandoned his master and boarded the ship for the return home.

Newton's spiritual awakening began with a chance reading of the *Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas à Kempis, during this voyage, when a terrible storm overtook the ship. Newton was at the pumps from three in the morning until noon. Called after about an hour of sleep, he could barely muster strength to steer. It seemed impossible that the ship could survive the ordeal. Newton continued at the wheel through the terrible storm, and it was not until six the following evening that the vessel emerged in safety. He marked the experience as the date of the decisive change in his life, but he was not converted in a moment. He returned home in 1748 and was married in 1750, but for four more years he remained a slave dealer. But he continued to undergo a spiritual development and deepening; he eventually left both slave trade and sea, and was ordained

<sup>2</sup> Martin, Bernard, *John Newton*, London: William Heinemann, 1950, p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

to the ministry of the Church of England in 1764, when nearly forty years of age. Then followed his sixteen years' ministry at Olney, and twenty-seven years at St. Mary Woolnoth, London. He died at the age of eighty-two, on December 21, 1807. The following is the first part of his epitaph, written by himself:

John Newton, Clerk,  
Once an infidel and libertine,  
A servant of slaves in Africa:  
Was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour  
Jesus Christ  
Preserved, restored, pardoned,  
And appointed to preach the Faith  
He had long labored to destroy.  
Near 16 years at Olney in Bucks:  
And 27 years in this church.

How different was the life, character, and temperament of Newton's friend, William Cowper! Born in 1731, son of the Rector of Berkhamstead, he lost his mother when he was only six years of age, a misfortune which left a lasting effect on him. The fact about Cowper's life which the most casual observer cannot miss is that his life was a series of bereavements. The world went against him. Five brothers and sisters died in their infancy; at twenty-four he lost his father; at thirty-nine his beloved brother, John Cowper.

From childhood William was subject to periods of melancholia, and as the years went by the attacks became more frequent and serious. When he was twenty-three he fell in love with his cousin, Theodora Cowper; but his uncle, her father, Ashley Cowper, to whom he had been much attached, forbade the marriage on the ground of Cowper's instability, and this aggravated his condition. He imagined he had committed the unpardonable sin, and again and again he attempted suicide. Placing himself under the care of an eminent physician, Dr. Cotton, for whom he ever evinced a most grateful regard, he in course of time regained mental health.

In 1767, Cowper settled in Olney, where John Newton was then the minister in charge of the parish, and there began a friendship which Newton described as most helpful to himself, and certainly the six years during which they were together were the happiest years of Cowper's life. He became Newton's lay helper at Olney. Newton says: "He loved the poor. He often visited them, and consoled and comforted them in their distress; and those who were seriously disposed were often cheered and animated by his prayers. The Lord evidently sent him to Olney, where

he has been a blessing to many, a great blessing to myself." <sup>4</sup> Now and again Cowper was stricken down with his painful malady, but the comforts of God's Word, and the loving attention of his friends, bore him through. Cowper died on April 25, 1800.

Whether Newton's influence upon his sensitive friend's life was good or bad is one of those debatable questions upon which literary critics are likely to continue to differ. To say, however, as Routley does, that "the very last thing he (Cowper) needed was the Calvinism of John Newton," and that "soon he began to sink into the waters on which he had so confidently walked, and then his old trouble came upon him with a rush," <sup>5</sup> seems to be a conclusion which is not warranted by the facts. It should at least be noted that other competent hymnologists, among them Frederick J. Gillman, <sup>6</sup> think that when the intercourse of the two friends was broken by Newton's removal to London, "one of the mainstays of the poet's activity and cheerfulness" was removed. One thing is certain: Cowper's mental trouble began many years before he had met Newton, and continued long after they were separated.

## II

The *Olney Hymn Book*, which the two companions produced together, contained 348 hymns, to which Cowper contributed 68 and Newton 280. The hymns were written with a double purpose: first to promote "the faith and comfort of sincere Christians," and secondly "as a monument to perpetuate the remembrance of an intimate and endearing friendship." Cowper would doubtless have written more, but for the many interruptions he had to endure on account of his mental malady. In the preface to the book, Newton writes:

We had not proceeded far upon our proposed plan before my dear friend was prevented by a long and affecting indisposition from affording me any further assistance. . . . I hung my harp upon the willows. . . . Yet my mind was afterwards led to resume the service. <sup>7</sup>

As a collection of hymns, the *Olney Hymns* was rarely used as a regular hymnbook; but, from that day to this, it has furnished rich material to

<sup>4</sup> Telford, John, *The Methodist Hymn-Book Illustrated*, London, Robert Culley, 2nd ed., revised, 1909, p. 83.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>6</sup> Gillman, Frederick John, *The Evolution of the English Hymn*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1927, p. 233.

<sup>7</sup> Brownlie, John, *The Hymns and Hymn Writers of the Church Hymnary*, London: Henry Frowde, 1911, p. 141.

compilers of other hymnbooks. Garrett Horder's evaluation is perhaps the best:

From the little volume of "Olney Hymns" the church has drawn a far larger number of hymns, and these greatly prized, than from many more voluminous collections. Its somewhat narrow theology is softened by the reality and tenderness of the religious experience of its authors, of both of whom it may be said, "They learnt in suffering what they taught in song."<sup>8</sup>

Dr. Benson says that the *Olney Hymn Book*

is best understood as a revival hymn book. In its day it had the same welcome and popularity that "Gospel Hymns" of the Moody and Sankey revival had in ours. . . . It was the Evangelical theology put into rhyme for singing, but even more for reading and remembering. It became an Evangelical handbook, printed over and over in England and America, and it exerted an immense influence.<sup>9</sup>

As we might expect from two men of such deep and sore experiences, their hymns contain more than beautiful poetic fancies, they are full of the deep realities of human experience. Cowper's pen writes of the purpose of God in our life. He tells us what sorrow is, and what God can accomplish in us by its means. The hymn, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way," has been described as the greatest hymn on divine Providence ever written, and was composed after a grievous visitation of mental distress. During its severity Cowper had resolved to take his own life. He gave his coachman orders to drive to the river Ouse. The night was dark, and the driver missed his way either by accident or of purpose; and Cowper found himself back at his own house. By that time the cloud had lifted from his mind, and he celebrated the Providence of God in this hymn.

When Charles H. Spurgeon, the famous English preacher, was a child, he was brought under the influence of the Rev. Richard Knill, a preacher and missionary of rare unction and eminent personal qualities. One day at morning prayers Rev. Knill, taking the lad upon his knee, said solemnly, in the presence of the family, "This child will one day preach the Gospel, and he will preach it to great multitudes. I am persuaded that he will preach in the Chapel of Rowland Hill."<sup>10</sup> He then gave the boy sixpence to learn the hymn, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way." And a promise was exacted that when, according to the prediction, he did preach in Rowland Hill's Chapel, that hymn should be sung.

<sup>8</sup> Horder, W. Garrett, *The Hymn Lover*, London: J. Curwen & Sons, 3rd ed., revised, p. 125.

<sup>9</sup> Benson, Louis F., *Studies of Familiar Hymns*, Second Series, The Westminster Press, 1926, pp. 134-135.

<sup>10</sup> *The Autobiography of Charles H. Spurgeon*, edited and condensed by David Otis Fuller, Zondervan Publishing House, 1946, p. 16.



Years after, in an emergency, Dr. Spurgeon was invited to preach in Rowland Hill's Chapel, and consented on condition that this hymn should be sung. The hymn was sung, and it would be impossible to describe the emotions of the preacher as he brought to mind the remarkable series of providences connecting his presence in that pulpit with the memorable scene of his childhood days. "My emotions on that occasion I cannot describe," Spurgeon records, "for the word of the Lord's servant was fulfilled."<sup>11</sup>

This hymn was the last contributed by Cowper to the Olney collection, and appears as number fifteen of Book Three, under the title, "Light Shining Out of Darkness." The original appeared in six stanzas of four lines each, but modern hymnals usually abridge it to four or five stanzas. We quote it in its entirety:

God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never-failing skill;  
He treasures up His bright designs,  
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace,  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour,  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan His work in vain.  
God is His own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain.

Cowper's hymn entitled "Joy and Peace in Believing" also has a universal appeal. It is perhaps Cowper's most perfect composition in the hymn form, and justly loved by all:

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Sometimes a light surprises  
 The Christian while he sings!  
 It is the Lord Who rises  
 With healing in His wings;  
 When comforts are declining,  
 He grants the soul again  
 A season of clear shining,  
 To cheer it after rain.

In holy contemplation  
 We sweetly then pursue  
 The theme of God's salvation,  
 And find it ever new;  
 Set free from present sorrow,  
 We cheerfully can say,  
 Let the unknown tomorrow  
 Bring with it what it may.

It can bring with it nothing  
 But He will bear us through;  
 Who gives the lilies clothing  
 Will clothe his people too;  
 Beneath the spreading heavens,  
 No creature but is fed;  
 And He who feeds the ravens  
 Will give His children bread.

Though vine nor fig tree neither  
 Their wonted fruit should bear,  
 Though all the fields should wither,  
 Nor flocks nor herds be there;  
 Yet God the same abiding,  
 His praise shall tune my voice;  
 For, while in Him confiding,  
 I cannot but rejoice.

It is its use of Scripture which gives this hymn its peculiar picturesqueness and makes it memorable. In verse one, Mal. 4:2 and II Sam. 23:4; in verses two and three, Matt. 6; in verse four, the Canticle of Habakkuk are alluded to. And yet the hymn does not read, as some Scripture hymns do, and especially some of Cowper's, like a versified concordance. The allusions dovetail neatly into each other, and the transition from one to the next is perfectly natural. "This neatness and precision of craftsmanship," Routley points out, "gives the hymn its conciseness and makes it one of those favourite hymns which teach men of Scripture unobtrusively and almost unconsciously: it is beyond doubt Cowper's happiest hymn, and his greatest."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Routley, E., *op. cit.*, p. 106.

Hymns equally well known are, "O! For a Closer Walk With God," and "Hark! My Soul, It Is the Lord," both expressive of Evangelical conviction and experience, clothed in tenderness and grace characteristic of the poet.

"O! For a Closer Walk With God" is well known to every church-goer. The hymn bears not only a title, but also a superscribed text, Gen. 5:24 ("And Enoch walked with God and he was not; for God took him"). This is essentially a hymn of loneliness and of penitence for loneliness; for Cowper always regarded his loneliness, and his sense of being cut off from God and from men, as the result of his own sin. The hymn begins:

O! for a closer walk with God,  
A calm and heav'nly frame;  
A light to shine upon the road  
That leads me to the Lamb.

Then there follow two verses that are so intimate as to be almost exclusively suitable for private devotion:

Where is the blessedness I knew,  
When first I saw the Lord?  
Where is the soul-refreshing view  
Of Jesus and His word?

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!  
But they have left an aching void  
The world can never fill.

Then there follows Cowper's penitence:

Return, O holy Dove, return,  
Sweet messenger of rest;  
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn,  
And drove Thee from my breast.

The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,  
And worship only Thee!

The whole is summed up in the final stanza:

So shall my walk be close with God,  
Calm and serene my frame;  
So purer light shall mark the road  
That leads me to the Lamb.

It is delightful to remember that the "Olney Hymns" were written for a little village congregation. It was for the opening of a room for "social prayer" that Cowper penned these beautiful lines:

Jesus, where'er Thy people meet,  
There they behold Thy mercy-seat;  
Where'er they seek Thee Thou art found,  
And every place is hallowed ground.

Cowper's great hymn of redemption, "There Is a Fountain Filled With Blood," a popular hymn in past years, is now less used and is omitted from some new hymnals because of its extravagant imagery. The familiar first verse is known to all:

There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stains.

This is a meditation on the saving power of the Blood of Christ, and for Cowper, as for the Bible, "blood" is the symbol of life, and bloodshed the symbol of life laid down. The first verse links up the initiating text from Zechariah (Zech. 13:1) with that in Revelation (7:14) which speaks of the saints who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The second verse proceeds straight to the Crucifixion itself:

The dying thief rejoiced to see  
That fountain in his day,  
And there have I, as vile as he,  
Wash'd all my sins away.

The third verse universalizes this for the whole church:

Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood  
Shall never lose its power,  
Till all the ransomed Church of God  
Be saved, to sin no more.

Brownlie says of this hymn, "Its imagery is certainly not Scriptural; and besides it gives a sensuous representation of the sacrifice of our Lord, which one hardly looks for outside the hymns of the mediaeval Latin Church."<sup>13</sup> Granted that the image is crude, and the verses have no literary merit. But, then, the reality is crude. Sin is not polite or polished, and the measures which God took for its redemption were not, in earthly terms, fit for fastidious minds to contemplate.

<sup>13</sup> Brownlie, John, *The Hymns and Hymn Writers of the Church Hymnary*, London: Henry Frowde, 1911, p. 142.

Of course, if one does not believe what this hymn says, it is little use singing it. But why not believe the truth that lies within the poetic image? It is true that in Heaven the redeemed praise God and the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and praise him constantly. If this truth is expressed in the language of eighteenth-century evangelicalism, it is none the less truth and to be received. "The only criticism that will stand against this hymn," Routley says, "is a criticism not of the hymn but of the untheological and uncompassionate age in which we at present live, which makes necessary the careful use of hymns so heavily loaded with theology and so uncompromisingly Scriptural in their language."<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps the words of G. Currie Martin express most clearly why Cowper's hymns have endured. "Their tenderness and beauty of language have endeared them to every generation, and they will abide as long as the needs they express are essential to the human soul."<sup>15</sup>

### III

Like Cowper, Newton shows his character in his hymns, and they breathe his experiences. His hymns, however, have really only one note, and it is an exalted one. It speaks of the unbounded love of the Savior. His most famous hymn is, undoubtedly, "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds." It is found in every hymnal, and most Christians know it by heart. It is written on the text: "Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee" (Song of Sol. 1:3).

This hymn simply rehearses with true Christian joy the happy associations that the Name of Jesus calls up in the Christian heart. We need only quote the first and last verses of this hymn:

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer's ear,  
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,  
And drives away his fear. . . .  
Till then I would Thy love proclaim  
With every fleeting breath,  
And may the music of Thy name  
Refresh my soul in death.

Different in approach, and not as good, is "One There Is Above All Others." This is the kind of sermon in song that Newton often wrote,

<sup>14</sup> Routley, E., *op. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>15</sup> Martin, G. Currie, *The Church and the Hymn Writers*, London: James Clarke & Co., Ltd., pp. 179-180.



and wrote well. Here are the homely illustrations that must have been the stock in trade of Newton's pastoral preaching.

One there is above all others,  
Who deserves the name of Friend;  
His is love beyond a brother's,  
Costly, free, and knows no end:  
They who once His kindness prove,  
Find it everlasting love.

Newton's personal consciousness of salvation was, of course, vivid, and he would certainly be expected to lay his emphasis on the joy and peace that comes from that consciousness. There is nothing borrowed in the lines:

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found;  
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,  
His word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be  
As long as life endures.

In this hymn we can trace Newton's simple and unaffected devotion to the Savior who had rescued him from the degradation of his youthful years.

Newton has given us three famous prayer hymns, redolent of the prayer meeting and eminently suitable for such an occasion as the mid-week devotional service. "Come, My Soul, Thy Suit Prepare," based on Solomon's prayer in I Kings 3:5ff., is justly famous. It is said that Spurgeon used for years to have a verse or two of it sung before the Great Prayer in his public services. It is a hymn of personal devotion, and we need quote only two verses of it:

Come, my soul, thy suit prepare,  
Jesus loves to answer prayer,  
He Himself has bid thee pray,  
Therefore will not say thee nay.

Thou art coming to a King,  
Large petitions with thee bring;  
For His grace and power are such,  
None can ever ask too much.

"Approach, My Soul, the Mercy-Seat" is another intimately tender hymn, this time with a distinctly penitential flavor. This hymn contains more of Newton's native warmth than some other hymns, and it combines penitence with courage in such a way as to induce great spiritual vigor through contrition.

Approach, my soul, the mercy-seat,  
Where Jesus answers prayer,  
Then humbly fall before His feet,  
For none can perish there.

Another hymn of "humble access" is "Behold the Throne of Grace," which is written on the same text as "Come, My Soul." Originally having eight verses, most hymnals today include only five. Here are the last three verses, as found in most hymnals:

My soul, ask what thou wilt,  
Thou canst not be too bold;  
Since His own blood for thee He spilt,  
What else can He withhold?

My soul, believe and pray,  
Without a doubt believe;  
Whate'er we ask in God's own way,  
We surely shall receive.

Here stands the promise fair,  
For God cannot repent,  
To fervent, persevering prayer  
He'll every blessing grant.

Newton has written one hymn of the Church which is immortal. "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken" is one of the great hymns of all time, and is, next to "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds," Newton's best-known and most widely used hymn. This is a great hymn of praise, which owes much to the splendid tune by the famous composer, Haydn, and which has won for itself a highly favored place in church worship:

Glorious things of thee are spoken,  
Zion, city of our God;  
He, whose word cannot be broken  
Formed thee for His own abode.

On the Rock of Ages founded,  
 What can shake thy sure repose?  
 With salvation's walls surrounded  
 Thou may'st smile at all thy foes.

Newton continued to preach until he was over eighty. So poor, however, was his sight during the latter years, that a servant stood behind him in the pulpit, and with a pointer traced out the lines on the manuscript of his sermon. On one occasion, Mr. Newton spoke the words, "Jesus Christ is precious," and then repeated them. His servant, thinking he was getting confused, whispered, "Go on, go on; you said that before." Newton, looking around, replied loudly, "John, I said that twice, and I'm going to say it again"; and then with redoubled force he thundered out: "Jesus Christ is precious."

From a dozen to twenty of the Olney Hymns are to be found in the various hymnals today. What is left, however, is far from being "empty chaff." Indeed, there are very few hymnbooks of the eighteenth century so interesting as this one. Dr. Gregory's apt comment on this collection of hymns will serve as a fitting conclusion to this article. He says:

When you have picked out of Watts and Doddridge their best hymns, you find it a wearisome and profitless task to plod through the remainder. An outrageous rhyme is a pleasing break in the dull monotony of the sentiment, but the Olney hymns, even at their feeblest, have life and vigor, and are often provokingly easy to remember. Their influence on modern hymnody has been all in favour of the expression of personal, individual experience, in which regard they may not unfairly be compared with many of the sublimest Psalms.<sup>16</sup>

We do well to recall today the contribution of William Cowper, whom Southey called "the best of English letter-writers," and John Newton, "the old African blasphemer," and the hymnbook which they compiled, known as the *Olney Hymns*, from which our congregational worship has been so greatly enriched.

<sup>16</sup> Gregory, Arthur E., *The Hymn-Book of the Modern Church*, London: Charles H. Kelly, 1904, pp. 233-234.

# The Christian Message and Mythology

*"Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate"*

JOHN ROBERT VAN PELT

FROM THE BEGINNING the Christian church has proclaimed her message with full assurance that it is eternal and changeless. She lays an infinite stress upon the objective reality of her message. And yet from the very beginning the thought of myth has been associated, in one way or another, with her word. Chiefly, it is true, by "those without"; sometimes, however, by those within the circle of believers. The report of the women, who went early to our Lord's sepulchre and found it empty but saw a vision of angels who told them he was risen from the dead, seemed to the disciples to be idle tales, the creation of a fond fancy. But it was in relation to the preaching of the apostles that the thought of myth first assumed real significance. That preaching was of Jesus as the Christ, and the heart of it all was his cross and his resurrection. But to the Jews this preaching was a stumbling-block, while to the Greeks it was foolishness. Any divine meaning in the first was denied and the latter was scorned as self-delusion or myth. The gnostic heresy, too, with its lofty indifference to the historical Jesus, unwittingly encouraged the building of myth.

The era of the forming and fixing of the idea of the "Catholic" Church in sharp distinction from heretical movements, culminating in the promulgation of the great Ecumenical Creeds, was an era marked by sharp and astute definition, but it was not an age of profound self-examination. Heresy seems to have been hated chiefly because it disturbed the church's tranquillity rather than because it was injurious to men's souls. The all-too-human desire to consolidate the rule of the bishops seems to have played too important a role. Consequently, in fixing and defining the church's dogma, no effort was made to exclude such elements of myth as seemed to belong to the orthodox tradition. The dominance of the pragmatic spirit has continued in the Roman Church unto this present day. That the individual Christian should be fully persuaded in his own mind is quite

---

JOHN ROBERT VAN PELT, S.T.B., Ph.D., is Professor Emeritus of Christian Doctrine at Gammon Theological Seminary, Atlanta, Georgia, and now resides at Des Moines, Iowa. His article is an extended review of the controversial book, *Kerygma and Myth*, edited by H. W. Bartsch; S.P.C.K. and Macmillan, 1954, 228 pp., \$4.50.

unnecessary. It is enough that he obediently accepts what the church teaches. It would be difficult or even quite impossible to show the questioning individual the inherent necessity, for instance, of belief in the bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary. The church commands it; let that suffice. In such an atmosphere the thought of radical self-criticism can find no place in the church. A young Englishman of the last century when surveying the sacred relics of Rome, under the guidance of a priest, asked: "Do you mean to say that these are the very bones of the saints?" "My young friend," the priest replied, "the God who could cause his Son to come to earth and be born of a Virgin was able to make these to be the very bones of the saints."

The Protestant Reformation opened the door for a radical re-examination of the church's teaching and tradition, but the time was not yet ripe for a serious study of the relation of myth to the Gospel tradition. It was not even yet fully ripe when, in 1835, Strauss published his epoch-making *Leben Jesu*, in which, with great ingenuity, he set forth his theory of the essentially mythical character of the Gospel tradition. That book, although not the very earliest attempt at the critical study of the life of Jesus, was the first that exerted any general influence. It was the first of a notable series of books that make up what has been called "the life-of-Jesus movement." The general aim of the representative members of the movement was the recovery of the historical Jesus from underneath the unconsciously exaggerated portraiture of his enthusiastic disciples. The relative futility of the endeavor came at length to be widely recognized. In 1892, Martin Kaehler dealt the whole movement a deadly blow in his *Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche biblische Christus*. Some years later Albert Schweitzer gave it the *coup de grace* in his *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*. Yet, while the movement quite failed to accomplish its original purpose, its labors were certainly not altogether in vain. Perhaps nothing more clearly indicates its net positive result than the words with which Rothe used to conclude his academic lecture on the life of Jesus: "We are persuaded that the biblical picture is essentially true, for it is greater than our heart."

At length the full time for the thorough examination of the relation of mythology to the New Testament has come. The problem has been forced upon the attention of Protestant theologians by Rudolf Bultmann, of Marburg, in an essay, *Neues Testament und Mythologie*. It appeared as long ago as 1941. It was a decidedly programmatic writing, boldly calling for a general clearing away of the mythical element in the church's



teaching and preaching. Naturally, he entertains no such preposterous thought as the elimination of all mythical language from the church's confessions of faith, from her hymns, or from her liturgical formulas, for these are largely derived from the New Testament itself. While his avowed aim is *the demythologizing of the church's teaching and preaching*, his proposed method is *not elimination but a deeper and truer interpretation*.

The immediate reaction to this challenge was a storm of indignant protest. Bultmann (it was said) would take away the solid ground for the church's message for Christmas, for Good Friday, for Easter, for Ascensiontide, for Pentecost. In relation to each of these great events in redemptive history he had pointed out what he regarded as elements of myth in the New Testament tradition. The essence of the New Testament preaching (kerygma) is (as he holds) enveloped in a very considerable body of myth. He calls upon us to distinguish between the kernel and the shell and to avoid the perpetuation of mythical concepts which are a barrier to the acceptance of the gospel by the modern man. Naturally, well-considered replies could not come at once. In due time, however, they did begin to come, and we may be sure the debate is not yet over.

The weightiest of them, together with Bultmann's own provocative essay, have been assembled by Dr. H. W. Bartsch and republished with excellent editorial notes, under the fitting title: *Kerygma und Mythos* (1948; second edition, 1951). A second volume appeared in 1952. It contains more than a score of interesting pieces, one of them being Karl Barth's critique, taken from his *Dogmatik*. Two joint studies by Christian Hartlich and Walter Sachs are rated by Bultmann as the best of all the contributions to the debate. The elaborate and sweeping rebuttal by Stauffer of Erlangen he refuses to discuss, saying that he and Stauffer might part peaceably, if each would make a confession in relation to the other: he, that he understands nothing of Stauffer's *Realtheologie*, and Stauffer, that he understands nothing of "demythologizing."

A recent book affords people of English tongue a welcome introduction to this highly important theological controversy. It bears the title: *Kerygma and Myth. A Theological Debate*. It comprises the most important of the essays contained in the earlier of Bartsch's two volumes. It was published in London in 1953 by S. P. C. K., and is distributed in this country by The Macmillan Company. The translator is Reginald H. Fuller. On the whole, he has done his work well. His English is idiomatic and readable. Rather often, however, he secures smoothness and readability at the expense of precision. Too often a troublesome German phrase

is rendered in a way that seriously obscures the writer's point. Still, the translation deserves far more praise than blame.

In order to gain a good understanding of the actual situation in the controversy it is necessary that we note the main phases of Bultmann's very interesting theological development, together with his present avowed standpoint and intention. His student days were spent chiefly at Marburg and Giessen, where he was strongly influenced by such biblical critics as Jülicher, Johannes Weiss, and Hermann Gunkel. As a matter of course, he did not escape the powerful influence of Herrmann in systematic theology. But as he concluded his student days he bore the stamp mainly of the most modern biblical critics, above all, of Gunkel. In the earlier years of his career as theological teacher he was regarded as a critic standing far to the left. All the while, however, a sense of the eternal truth and infinite value of the gospel of Jesus Christ seems to have been growing in his soul. All this was going on without the least abatement in his zest for bold historical criticism. One of his most characteristic writings in his little book, *Jesus*.<sup>1</sup> This book combines many startling and disputable historical judgments with strong expressions of faith in the essence of the gospel.

When the "liberal" critic Bultmann avowed his accord with the dogmatic standpoint of Karl Barth, therefore, many were astonished, but not those who knew him best. Bultmann himself found nothing incongruous in his position. And when, some years later, he called for the demythologizing of our theology and preaching, few of his critics thought of charging him with defection from the faith. Herein his case differs radically from that of Strauss with his *Life of Jesus* in 1835. There, believing scholars rightly judged that a spirit of negation was at work; here it is generally acknowledged that, however misdirected his aim may be, Bultmann is animated by a zeal for the furtherance of the gospel.

Bultmann has set forth his standpoint, aim, and method with eminent care and precision. He gives us first a well-considered statement of the problem. This naturally requires a careful statement of the situation as he sees it, together with a fundamental inquiry into the nature of our task. As preliminary to it all he offers a definition of myth. Secondly, he considers *the concrete carrying out of the demythologization*.

In defining myth, Bultmann makes use of several formulas, all having the same import. He takes myth to be the representing of things transcendental, other-worldly, divine in forms or concepts that belong to this world. He cannot, of course, mean that all use of earthly imagery in speaking of heavenly things is myth. Often such use is only the conscious

<sup>1</sup> Translated as *Jesus and the Word*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934.

free play of fancy. It is myth only where the earthly imagery is believed to be the proper and literally true representation of the thing intended. Thus one can sing—and sing *ex animo*—that magnificent hymn, "Lo! He comes with clouds descending," quite without a trace of myth in one's mind, if he takes it as pure fancy. If he conceives it as literal fact, then it is myth.

Bultmann reminds us that "the event of Jesus Christ," which is the one great theme of the New Testament, was at once an event in history and yet transcending history. He reminds us, too, that when Jesus lived and labored upon earth and when his gospel was first preached, the generally-accepted world-picture was utterly different from our modern conception. That world-picture, he points out, strongly and at every point affected the form of the preaching (kerygma). When God was spoken of as "in heaven," he was conceived to be so in a literal and local sense. That ancient world-picture has now been done away. It is indeed impossible that we do away with the naïve imagery of tradition; it is possible, Bultmann holds, and needful, that we make it clear to the Christian public that our imagery is symbolic, not realistic.

The world-picture of the time of Christ and his apostles was of a three-storied universe: heaven above, the earth in the middle, hell beneath. Heaven is the abode of God and of his holy angels; but also—though certainly not in *highest* heaven—the abode of powers not obedient to Christ. Accordingly, to illustrate here by a single point, Christ was conceived as descending and ascending spatially as well as in a spiritual sense.

On the background of this general world-picture and with constant reference to it, Bultmann examines the New Testament record of the kerygma at all its main points and thinks he finds more or less of myth everywhere. The grand "event of Christ," his coming from God into our world, he feels to be firmly established for faith. But the manner of his coming seems to him to be not only beyond our power to know, but also not essential to faith or faith's certainty. He finds elements of myth even in the record of our Lord's passion. The traditional thought of a debt literally paid—whether to Satan or to God himself—seems to Bultmann to lie in the region of myth. As for the resurrection of Jesus, the fundamental concept of his triumph over death—this Bultmann holds to be of the very essence of the faith. But the record of its manner and circumstance he holds to be quite enveloped in myth. As for the ascension, it is relatively easy for him to show that the idea of a literal and visible rising from earth on his way to a heavenly abode is essentially mythical. The popular conception is hardly even that of the New Testament.

He is gone! a cloud of light  
Has received him from our sight.

These lines of Dean Stanley's better represent the New Testament record. As for the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, Bultmann has no thought of denying that an overpowering sense of the presence of their Lord came upon the church. The record of the manner he holds to be largely mythical.

Such, in brief, is the situation as Bultmann conceives it. Now comes the question: What are we to do about it? The answers are sure to vary widely. At the extreme right are those who think there is no need to do anything: the few relics of superstition will drop off of themselves as general knowledge increases.

Considerable parts of Bultmann's view are acceptable to most of his critics. Naturally, the points where the most conservative dissent from his view most emphatically are his treatment of the cross and the resurrection. They, too, recognize the error of a crude "blood theology," but still insist upon the reality and the significance of more than Bultmann finds room for. But it is his handling of the Easter witness that meets with the most vigorous rebuttal. This is indeed the one point which Barth argues out. He does it with all his characteristic energy. Four replies to Bultmann appear in the translation mentioned above. They are by Julius Schniewind of Halle, Ernst Lohmeyer of Breslau, Helmuth Thielicke of Tübingen, and F. K. Schumann of Halle. The first two are now deceased. Perhaps the weightiest of the four pieces is that of Thielicke, one of the brightest lights among the younger generation of German theologians. His contribution gains in interest and value by the fact that his presuppositions are mainly the same as those of Bultmann, while his conclusions differ in important ways. Schniewind's warm evangelical spirit lends special value to his well-considered judgments. The resurrection of Jesus must be regarded, he insists, as *geschichtlich*, objectively real, even though not *historisch* in the sense of being susceptible of historical demonstration.

The whole highly interesting debate leaves upon the evangelical believer the feeling that the removal from our teaching and preaching of all superstition and myth will be for the church's health and progress, but that we have every ground for insisting upon the objective reality of the work wrought in Jesus' passion and upon the historical reality of the resurrection.

## Book Reviews

**Modern Christian Movements.** By JOHN T. McNEILL. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954. 197 pp. \$3.50.

An acquaintance with the historical backgrounds of the denominational complex in which we live is essential to the modern churchman if he is (a) to avoid the alluring roads that former generations have followed to dead ends, and (b) to give the fullest expression to the vital qualities that are inherent in his own tradition. The acquiring of this knowledge, so far from being an irksome chore, can be a genuine delight. Proof of this statement is found in this book, written by one who has often made the great figures of church history walk and speak again.

The first chapter describes the rise and progress of a movement that has exercised wide and deep influence on both sides of the Atlantic—English Puritanism. One is reminded of Macaulay's forceful defense of this misunderstood and much maligned body of Christians: "People who saw nothing of the godly but their uncouth visages and heard nothing from them but their groans and whining hymns might laugh at them. But those had little reason to laugh who encountered them in the hall of debate or on the field of battle. These fanatics brought to civil and military matters a coolness of judgment and an immutability of purpose which some writers have thought inconsistent with their religious zeal but which were in fact the necessary effects of it. The intensity of their feelings on one subject made them tranquil on every other." It would be impossible to account for the development of Protestantism or democracy in America apart from the writings of Richard Baxter, John Milton, and John Bunyan.

A wholesome injection of Puritan stamina and unflinching endurance would be a healthy antidote to some of the softness of a generation that has been tempted to rely upon saccharine panaceas and superficial short cuts to success. "All in all, Puritanism has been profitable to the modern world. . . . It was not the whole Christianity, since it was weak in the expression of charity. But it may be that in life and worship the time is ripe for a kindlier and wiser utterance of some of the old Puritan criticisms and affirmations."

German Pietism (chap. 2), which came to its widest influence somewhat later than Puritanism, held many principles in common with the English movement. They were both essentially reactions against immorality, formalism, and Romanism. Pietism put more emphasis upon love and joy; Puritanism emphasized faith and works with somber singleness of heart. Prominent among the emphases were a deeper acquaintance with the Word of God, the restoration of the spiritual priesthood, and the practical implementation of the love for one's neighbor. Probably the outstanding characteristics of Pietism were its determination to avoid political entanglements and its missionary passion as expressed in the Moravian Church. The author makes no comment upon the degree to which this movement may have been responsible for the failure of the church in Germany to awaken promptly to the perils of Hitlerism.

The Evangelical Movement (chap. 3) is another example of an impressive fact of history which has occurred a number of times in the life of the church, the Reformation itself being one instance. I refer to the fact that, when the combination of social and religious factors has prepared the way, the fire breaks out almost simultaneously



at a number of different places in apparently wholly independent and unrelated forms. One of the surprising facts which the Evangelical Movement demonstrates is that a genuine revival spirit flames with equal ardor whether its underlying theology be of the Arminian or the Calvinist variety. Methodist readers who have become accustomed to putting the Wesleys at the head of the evangelical procession will be interested if not disillusioned to find how many great preachers on both sides of the Atlantic had begun earlier, and were preaching the gospel of the new movement before John Wesley's heart was "strangely warmed." Such readers, however, will find confirmation for their scale of priority in the statement, "John Wesley, on a fair judgment, has no equal and no rival among them." What a deep and varied stream of spiritual enrichment and power flowed from this new and widespread awakening!

With full recognition of its imperfections, the author is convinced that "No Christianity that departs wholly from evangelical ideas will win the battle in this or any future generation. We ought not lightly to cast away its basic conceptions of the Christian task. We need to guard its sense of the importance of the inner transformation of the individual lives, along with its emphasis upon socially remedial activity and readiness to seize the initiative." He also fears that the present generation is "in danger of exchanging its confidence and hopefulness for theological puzzlement and pusillanimous defeatism."

Tractarianism and Anglo-Catholicism (chap. 4) were a combination of a belated English Counter-Reformation and a rebellion against undue encroachments of the government upon the prerogatives of the Church. Almost without exception Evangelicalism was held in high contempt by the Tractarians. The man who suffered most acutely under the irreconcilable tension which he had helped to develop was John Henry Newman. Along with the admiration which one must feel for so noble and devout a soul, there is difficulty in understanding how a conscientious man could have so distorted his sense of truth as to write some of the statements that appeared in the "Tracts" in criticism of his own communion and in defense of Romanism. "Could Anglicanism be revived and unified on the basis of a recognition of Rome as the true Church? . . . Anglicanism had strength enough to utter a thunderous 'No.'" But the author does not list Tractarianism wholly on the debit side of the ledger. "Keble's view that the Reformation was providentially overruled for good may be applied to the exaggerated emphases in Anglo-Catholicism itself, while from its excellences it has been a quickened force in modern Christianity."

The Ecumenical Movement in historical perspective (chap. 5) begins with the review of the ardent pleas for union long before the present movement which many regard as being "the most significant and arresting development in modern Christianity" got under way. "One could assemble a substantial library of treatises containing proposals for church union, mutual recognition and intercommunion, written in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries." It will be a matter of surprise to many readers to find that the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910, from which so many creative results issued, was not the first of these conferences but the seventh.

Dr. McNeill thinks that the disposition to "repent" for divisiveness may lose sight of the historical perspective. "It is far from true that the blame should always rest upon the communion that took a new name. No good will come of an indiscriminate public bewailing of our fathers' sins. It is demonstratable that in many instances denominations were formed by men of excellent intention and deep piety. . . .

Moreover, it is not as a rule by taking flight from our own denomination to any other that we can make a contribution to ecumenical Christianity, but rather by accepting our own church as a reality and trying to lead it into the world-wide fellowship. Ultimate union, if it is to be real, must embrace the values and take over the loyalties of the denomination, and it is well that these should be freshly evaluated. We must make known our inventories to each other: we can share nothing that we have not first appropriated and appreciated. It is likely that in most instances the current revival of the denomination is not promoted in an exclusive spirit."

The revitalizing of Roman Catholicism in this generation, especially in English-speaking nations, is a phenomenon to which attention is given in the final chapter. When no room for doubt was left as to the scholarly ability, the devotion and the determination of the leaders of the Reformation, vigorous plans were set in motion by Rome for a Counter-Reformation. The Council of Trent, the leadership of some specially gifted popes and the activity of the Jesuits, who brought to the protection of Mother Church a military zeal based upon a conception of man's free will not unlike that of the Arminians—all of these and other positive forces combined to free Romanism from some of its more corrupt abuses and to stop the inroads of Protestant invasion. No effort to account for the strength of Romanism will succeed if it fixes attention upon the political and diplomatic activities of the papacy and loses sight of "the religious life of Roman Catholicism, its saints, its prayers, its devotional literature and all the spiritual food by which it is nurtured."

In spite of the fact that the recent unfounded pronouncement of the Assumption of Mary "has distressed many Christians both as a fresh occasion of division and as a concession to obscurantism," it is a fact to be accepted that the Roman Church is "likely to be quite familiar to our children's children and to their descendants through long generations." "Let us not pray for the extinction of Roman Catholicism. We ought to reflect that in our own Churches we are prone to complacency and inertia, and that the stimulus of Roman Catholic pressure may help to deliver us from the insidious evils that afflict every Church whose status is unchallenged."

This journey through our denominational backgrounds will be an illuminating and rewarding experience for any reader. And where could one find a more interesting and dependable guide than Dr. McNeill?

WILLIAM C. MARTIN

Bishop, The Methodist Church, Dallas-Fort Worth Area, Dallas, Texas;  
President of the National Council of Churches, 1952-1954.

**Protestant Christianity Interpreted Through Its Development.** By JOHN DILLENBERGER and CLAUDE WELCH. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954. xii-340. \$4.50.

*Protestant Christianity* is one of the most valuable interpretations of historical theology to appear in our generation. Above all, it provides modern Protestantism with a firm theological foundation based on the continuing tradition of the Reformation. It places this theology in the context of Protestant history, acknowledging the importance and influence of institutional development and social factors without attempting to deal with them as such. It cuts across denominational lines in an effort to clear away the ecclesiastical confusion of tongues. In a style simple yet cogent the authors have interpreted Protestantism in terms of its theological development. Such a treatment is much needed as a counterbalance to the older works that gave

undue emphasis to early and medieval—and hence inevitably Roman Catholic—eras.

The book is devoted exclusively to the period from and including the Reformation down to recent theological trends in Europe and the United States. Although the authors acknowledge the positive and permanent values of theological liberalism, they are agreed that the most vigorous current in the twentieth century has led rather in the direction of biblical theology and what is termed neo-orthodoxy. After chapters dealing with the theology of the Reformation come others on Puritanism, the Evangelical Revival, the Enlightenment, liberal theology and the social gospel in the nineteenth century, "Directions of Recent Protestant Thought," and the ecumenical movement.

The authors are not concerned to provide a survey of the history of modern Christianity. The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox aspects are excluded. The vast theme of the expansion of Christianity is considered only in so far as it bears on the interpretation of modern Protestantism. One finds little on the development of denominations for that is not the purpose of the book. Their approach is well described in their own words, as found throughout: "We are quite aware that this book is throughout an interpretative study." "Where denominational distinctions became secondary to movements which cut through them—and this has been generally true since the beginning of the nineteenth century—we have largely omitted them from consideration." On Lutheranism and Calvinism in the Reformation: "Here we can only outline the development, touching upon institutional and geographical expansion, and devoting most of our attention to the religious problems and outlooks of the two bodies." And in the nineteenth century: "Our concern, however, is not with the history of the expansion of Christianity, or of Protestant Christianity in particular, but with the significance of the missionary movement in the life of Protestantism as such."

As a result, if the authors had not carefully delimited their special interest, the interpretation must be regarded as lopsided. Calvin's story is dealt with in a footnote. Then thirty-two pages follow on Lutheran-Calvinist theology. The spread of Calvinism is covered in four pages, two of which deal with the broadly important developments in Geneva. One finds ample and rewarding discussion of Arminians, Kant, Harnack, Barth, but none of Richelieu, Pius IX, the Disciples. The Oxford Movement rates five lines. These facts illustrate the self-imposed limitations of scope, but do not at all reflect upon the excellence of the material properly included. Recent reinterpretations of Puritanism and Congregationalism are incorporated in the chapter covering those topics, and the relevance of the Wesleyan Revival to historic Protestantism is clearly delineated. But many will cavil at the statement (p. 180f) lumping together Pietism, the Wesleyan movement, and the Awakenings: "These movements were almost exclusively concerned with recalling men to an immediate personal experience of the working of God in Christ, and were generally indifferent or even hostile to theological endeavors."

The authors undertook this work at the invitation of the Committee on Projects and Research of the National Council on Religion in Higher Education. Dr. Dillenberger has taught historical theology at Columbia, and is now called to Harvard Divinity School. Dr. Welch teaches theology at Yale Divinity School. According to the Preface they conferred in the writing with members of a subcommittee of theologians in the National Council on Religion in Higher Education and with associates in the Society for Theological Discussion. The book is commendably free from errors of fact (but separation of church and state in France in "1903," page 161)

and well adapted in organization and style for lay reading and collegiate classes in religion. It should serve worthily in advancing the cause of the ecumenical movement.

FREDERICK A. NORWOOD

Associate Professor of Church History, Garrett Biblical Institute, Northwestern University Campus, Evanston, Illinois.

*Revelation and Religion.* By HERBERT H. FARMER. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954. x-244 pp. \$3.50.

The personalistic emphasis which characterized Dr. Farmer's earlier volumes, *God and Men* and *The World and God*, is especially manifest in the present volume, the first series of his Gifford Lectures for 1950. Lord Gifford's purpose in creating this Foundation has, in recent years, been interpreted more liberally than at one time would have seemed justifiable, as witness the lectures given on the Foundation by Karl Barth in 1937-1938. Dr. Farmer has taken advantage of this greater freedom, even to the extent of questioning the propriety of the concept, "natural theology." He does, indeed, stay by the terms of the Foundation in his consideration, at the outset, of both "natural theology" and "natural religion."

The consideration leads him to conclude that to whatever "theistic idea" a man may be led by what he regards as purely rational processes, the idea will always be colored by the fact that already, in the deeper levels of his being, he has a "concern" in respect of God—"a religious experience"—which is more impelling to him than the idea. It is this experience which gives to religion its quality of livingness. Religion which has no vitality is for Dr. Farmer no religion, since it has no contact with God. "Living religion arises at the point where ultimate reality manifests itself to the human spirit" (p. 26).

Hence, to some extent any vital religion is "revelation," and reaches beyond the merely natural. The word "encounter" perhaps is overworked just now, but it stands for a reality of which both theology and philosophy must take account. It at least requires the recognition of both the objective and the subjective in vital religion. If either be absent, the alleged religion is something else.

This duality is supremely present in Christianity. Insistence on this serves as a postulate. Any philosophy calls for presuppositions. Dr. Farmer is therefore justified in the intent of these lectures, which is nothing less than to examine religion—and therefore "religions"—in the light of the Christian affirmation "that God has made unique and final disclosure of his nature as personal, and his purpose towards man, through Jesus Christ and through the relationship with himself which that revelation makes possible for men" (pp. 20-21). Here is both the required objectivity and subjectivity. Here is both the beyond and the within. The duality exists as a perfect mutuality. What all living religion to some extent adumbrates is here in perfection. Therefore all religions may properly be read, understood, and evaluated in the light of the religion, the religion being that whose source and center is the Incarnation of God in the life of men as Jesus Christ.

There is something refreshingly bold—some would say audacious—about this intent. Dr. Farmer takes Christianity in the essential form of its biblical presentation, shows what all religion is in its fundamental nature, and concludes, on the basis of the assembled evidence, that what all other religions mean, what they are about, what they witness to, is this religion, this religion of the Incarnation, this complete outgoing of God evoking the complete response of man, this divine-human fellowship, this con-

summation of the "I-Thou" relationship, this "household of faith" arising from the reconciliation of the wayward children and the loving will of the Father-God.

The norm for this examination of the religious life of mankind is, for Dr. Farmer, defined by Christian worship, of which Christ is the focal center, a center whose implicate is the Trinity. In a word, the analysis of Christian worship as the expression of Christian faith yields the formula, "God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." This, of course, means that Dr. Farmer's ultimate purpose requires the introduction of theology into the statement of the norm for the use he has in mind. His elaboration of the formula, especially what he says about the Holy Spirit, is worthy of prolonged consideration. It indicates that he is very much more than a philosophical personalist; he is, besides, a man with very deep Christian insights, who does not hesitate to make use of these insights as valid data for a *Weltanschauung*.

Dr. Farmer's elaboration of the formula yields seven elements, summarized as follows: (1) God is *ontologically* other; (2) God is *axiologically* other, i. e., in himself the realized perfection of all value; (3) God is *personal*; (4) God *asks all*, i. e., he makes an absolute claim; (5) God *gives all*, i. e., he is the final security of man's life; (6) God is an active *presence and power* within the worshiper's own being; (7) a *feeling-tone*, awe before God's holiness, accompanies the encounter.

Dr. Farmer does not mean that these are consciously present to the mind of the worshiper in equal degree in his worshipping. He means rather that reflection justifies the assertion of their presence "in a coordinate balance and unity with one another," even if at a given time they are not all consciously and equally "there." He says, "They form an organic whole in which every element interpenetrates and qualifies every other element" (p. 113). If therefore Christianity has the ultimate significance that is here assigned to it, all living religions may be expected to disclose some traces of these elements.

There is a valuable chapter on primitive religions and polytheism, in which Dr. Farmer, by distinguishing between the vital center of religion, and attitudes and practices which are simply incidental cultural concomitants, avoids many of the extravagances too often present in religious psychologies and histories. The remainder of the book is a careful account of the main historical religious "types" and "forms," and a consideration of the relation in which they may be seen to stand to the accepted "norm" and its "elements." These types and forms may be found in empiric and historical Christianity just as much as in non-Christian religion.

Dr. Farmer finds that these "types" and "forms" are five in number: the religion of absolute dependence; the religion of ideal values; the religion of introversion; the religion of obligation; and eudaemonistic religion. All these recognize the objectivity of God: he is "other" and he is "there." But there are types and forms in which the objective is replaced by the subjective. What is central here is the fact of human needs which religion is held to satisfy, quite apart from any apprehension of God in his otherness. Here again there are five examples: corporate or group religion; dynamic or vitalizing religion; the religion of withdrawal; the religion of fulfillment or completion; the religion of integration or unification. Dr. Farmer fully realizes that Christianity makes a place for all of these; his criticism is that all too often they are cultivated in complete separation from the objective side of Christianity, becoming instead mere psychological and sociological "techniques," and therefore, strictly speaking, not religion at all.

The book is not always easy reading. But the intent is plain enough. The argu-



ment has great persuasive power, due in part to the generous appraisal of religions other than Christian. It is refreshingly free from dogmatism, except from that which is implicit in the main proposition. The book constitutes, largely by its indirection, a powerful Christian apologetic.

EDWIN LEWIS

Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology, Drew Theological Seminary; now Mendham, New Jersey.

**The Teaching Ministry of the Church.** By JAMES D. SMART. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954. 207 pp. \$3.00.

**Christian Teaching in the Churches.** By JOHN Q. SCHISLER. New York: The Abingdon Press, 1954. 171 pp. \$2.50.

Christian education is here to stay. Confusion prevails when the religious education movement of the early part of the Twentieth Century is identified with either religious education broadly conceived, or Christian education within the Protestant Church in particular. It is essential, therefore, that education which is Christian in content and purposes must be Christian in theology. One of the major weaknesses of education in the typical Protestant church school has been the inadequate doctrine of the church which prevailed within Protestantism generally. The two books under consideration attempt to correct this omission; the book by Smart with a direct approach to a systematic development of a sound doctrine of the church, and the one by Schisler with an indirect approach which implies an adequate doctrine of the church and of all its work.

The titles might convey more similarity in treatment than the books actually contain. They have in common the declaration of the position of the author as he expresses his personal views and reflects the major trends and emphases in his particular denomination. Neither book grows out of extensive research studies executed for the particular publication.

The book by Smart has for its subtitle, *An Examination of the Basic Principles of Christian Education*. It is a critical examination. The views expressed are distinctly individual and highly controversial. Dr. Smart's extensive experience in the pastorate and his deep concern with Christian education qualify him admirably for this study and lend authority to his observations. He relies strongly upon the history of religious education and places major emphasis upon the Bible as the source book for Christian teaching. Even his doctrine of the church is fundamentally biblical in its basis. He is convinced that "The Word of God and the Church are inseparable. . . . The Word creates the Church, not the Church the Word." The expected result of such orientation would be a critical appraisal of "educational methods" in Christian teaching. His observation that Christian education during the last half century has relied much more extensively upon educational psychology than upon the Christian dogma is undeniable.

Dr. Smart's conclusion that this reliance has been detrimental to the total task of the church in the modern world, however, needs careful evaluation and might need modification in the light of thorough research. His distinction between preaching and teaching is valid, as is also his insistence that they must constantly be related. "Preaching essentially is the proclamation of this Word of God to man in his unbelief. . . . Teaching essentially (but not exclusively) addresses itself to the situation of the man who has repented and turned to God and to the situation of children of

believers who through the influence of their parents have in them a measure of faith, even though they have also in them a large measure of unbelief." This distinction is fundamental to the whole presentation in the book. Witness and nurture alike are not confined to specialized areas but are the task of the whole church. The book deals sparingly with educational program or methods for implementing its theological concerns. It is, however, a trenchant exposition of an important position in Christian education and because it reflects a growing trend in the field, it is important reading for pastors, professional religious education workers, and serious-minded laymen.

Dr. Schisler's book has for its subtitle, *Religious Education Today—Its Nature, Scope and Purpose*. It is not a "practical" book of teaching methods, but it deals much more extensively with the program of Christian education in the local church than does the other book in this review. The challenge which faces Protestantism at the present time, as seen by Schisler, is "to see and understand the whole function of the Church." This is certainly a worthy purpose and one which the church will be involved in realizing for an indefinite period of time. It is in the realization of the basic purposes of Christian education that the contrast between Smart and Schisler is most noticeable. Smart takes a dim view of educational processes *per se* and is highly critical of moralistic preaching and teaching. Schisler, on the other hand, is fundamentally "person-centered" and has high expectation for the development of Christian character through sound educational principles.

Schisler would have at least as much concern about the way the teachers teach as he would with what is taught. He accepts the objectives which have been current in the religious education movement in modern times. He has little hope that the church school will accomplish these worthy objectives if it is simply a department of the church and not adequately related to its total life. He looks forward to the time when the local church will no longer think of that particular agency as the one which will be almost solely responsible for Christian education. The whole task of the church is involved, and worship becomes much more essential to the educational process as to both motivation and expression than is possible when "Sunday school" and "church" are operated as almost separate institutions.

One is impressed by the similarity of views expressed by Smart and Schisler on the subject of evangelism. In this case, Schisler is using "evangelism" in the way in which Smart used "preaching." Schisler insists that "Evangelism is the process by which one is led to make a decision for Jesus Christ as personal Saviour and Lord. Christian education is the process by which persons are stimulated, instructed, and guided in their growth toward the fulfillment of Christian character." With this purpose in mind, Schisler indicates the possibilities of programing in various departments of the church, as well as in community and especially in public schools.

The book contains some specific guidance for the selection and training of lay workers in Christian education and will, therefore, be especially helpful to pastors and division superintendents within the church school.

Both books deal with much the same material, as their titles indicate. They are strikingly different, however, in development and must be thought of as complimentary rather than in competition with each other.

SAM HEDRICK

Director of Supervised Field Work, Boston University School of Theology,  
Boston, Massachusetts.

**If You Marry Outside Your Faith.** By JAMES A. PIKE. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954. 191 pp. \$2.50.

Any book that meets an urgent need will be assured of a welcome. Filling a gap does not, however, make the book a good one. Fortunately, Dean Pike's little volume on interfaith marriage meets both of these criteria. It is timely, and it is sound.

That it is timely every working pastor knows. The American public school, that great bulwark of democracy, has dissolved away religious discrimination to the extent that it is easy and natural, as in no other country in the world, for young people to form friendships across the boundaries of faith. Unfortunately this valuable process gives rise not only to mutual tolerance and mutual respect, but also, when the circumstances are suitable, to mutual affection! From friendship to love, and from love to marriage, become increasingly the logical steps that follow from this favorable commingling.

How far this process has gone no one certainly knows. It has been estimated that about one-third of all Roman Catholics in the United States marry non-Catholics. The harassed Protestant pastor in a community of mixed faith will be disposed to accept this estimate without demur. For him it poses urgent questions. What are the facts about these marriages? How strongly should they be discouraged? How should he counsel with the persons concerned?

Dean Pike has sought to provide answers not only to the questions of the pastor but also to those of everyone else who is in any way affected by, or interested in, this issue. His book, in eleven concise chapters, covers the field very adequately. He states, as clearly as they have yet been defined, the official attitudes toward intermarriage adopted by the three major American faiths—Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant. He describes and discusses, with sympathetic insight, the areas of tension that develop again and again in unions of this type: in-law hostility, clashes about birth control, divided allegiance, disagreement over child rearing, and the like. This discussion is aided by the use of briefly summarized illustrations (magniloquently described in the publisher's blurb as "case histories") which keep it continuously related to life situations.

A careful study of this book should bring home, to any couple contemplating marriage across the boundaries of faith, the hazards that confront them. Such research data as are available shows the breakdown rate for this kind of marriage to be between two and three times that which is found where the partners share the same religion. There is reason to believe that these figures might reliably indicate also the relative difficulty of mutual adjustment in those interfaith marriages which do not end in an open break.

The best solution, all students of the subject agree, is avoidance of the kind of emotional involvement that can lead to interfaith marriage. The contents of this book, widely disseminated among young people of high-school age, could do much toward achieving this end. But when two people are already resolved to marry, or are already married, what then?

Dean Pike faces this squarely. His remedy in either case is the same. Evasion of difference is an unworthy and ineffective policy. Differences must be acknowledged, understood, and where possible resolved. He calls on those involved in a prospective interfaith marriage to re-examine conscientiously their own spiritual position and to study sympathetically their partners' convictions. This, he believes, may

lead to a solution in more instances than might be supposed. If one, as a result of this process, is able to embrace the faith of the other, or if both voluntarily accept a new faith in common, this clearly solves the problem. Failing that, enough mutual respect, consideration and tolerance may emerge from the study experience to enable the couple to live with the differences they cannot eradicate. Some interfaith marriages do in fact attain a high degree of happiness.

The kind of investigation Dean Pike would wish the couple to make will not be easy—especially for those of limited education. Counseling and guidance on the part of the pastor may in many instances be necessary. The closing chapter of the book provides some sound principles which should help ministers to be serviceable in this kind of counseling situation.

One of the chief merits of this book is the tolerant spirit in which it is written. Himself an Episcopalian, Dean Pike is singularly free from religious or denominational bias. In his discussion of faiths other than his own, he does not hesitate to criticize where he feels injustice is being done; yet he treats those other religious groups always with the respect they deserve; and he has clearly studied their tenets with great care before venturing to discuss them.

Dr. Pike brings to his study, also, a legal training which enables him to speak with authority where a minister as such would be in no position to venture an opinion. Without hesitation he declares that a contract to raise one's children in a faith other than one's own is void *ab initio* from an ethical point of view, and legally unenforceable while the marriage is intact. To be able to quote this will on occasion be very useful to the Protestant pastor.

The written style of the book is very uneven. In some places the author becomes involved in awkward sentences, such as "In a mixed marriage one of the parents—and sometimes both—are robbed of the opportunity of bringing to their children the best spiritual heritage that he or she knows" (p. 102). At other points, however, a smooth flow of language is achieved. Dean Pike has a capacity for vivid analogy. Discussing the religious training of children, he says, "It is more reliable to 'install the wiring' for spiritual communication as early as possible in life." Speaking of the attempt of the couple to reach common convictions, he says, "To seek to persuade oneself of the truth of the other's position, or yield in order to simplify things, is to make one of the parties into an adjective and leave the other a noun."

Oddly enough, the best section of the whole book, in the opinion of this reviewer, is peripheral to the subject of interfaith marriage. In his third chapter Dean Pike sets out a closely reasoned and convincing statement of the Protestant ethic concerning birth control. It is doubtful whether this has ever been better done. This is a subject on which many church members are woefully in need of guidance, and a future volume along those lines by Dean Pike might meet this need as adequately as his present book meets the need for clarification of the interfaith marriage issue.

DAVID R. MACE

Professor of Human Relations, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey.

**Morals and Medicine.** By JOSEPH FLETCHER. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1954. xvii-243 pp. \$4.50.

The author, professor of pastoral theology and Christian ethics at the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Mass., examines the ethical significance of five controversial areas in the field of medical practice. They are (1) the patient's right

to know the doctor's actual diagnosis of himself; (2) the control of conception; (3) artificial insemination; (4) sterilization; and (5) euthanasia. These for the most part are areas in the ethical realm which are either ignored by religious leaders because they are so explosive, or in which the answers are arbitrarily predetermined by religious prejudice.

The measuring stick with which the writer evaluates the five problems stated above is the moral significance and inherent sacredness of personality. "The basis of my ethical standpoint," states Dr. Fletcher, "is probably best pin-pointed as personalist . . . By personalism I mean the correlation of personality and value; the doctrine, that is, that personality is a unique quality in every human being, and that it is both the highest good and the chief medium of our knowledge of the good."

To the doctor, one who is ill should be more than just a patient; he should be primarily a person. Professionally, the doctor owes the patient all his technical and medical skill; ethically, he owes him his best judgment as to the patient's actual physical condition. "The patient is not a problem; he is a *person* with a problem." The patient has a right, insists Dr. Fletcher, to know the medical facts in his case, for four reasons: moral quality is taken away from him if this information is withheld; the medical conclusions belong primarily to the patient; the relationship between patient and doctor is a personalistic one; and to deny the patient knowledge pertaining to life-and-death issues is for the physician to assume an awesome responsibility which is not rightfully his.

Perhaps the most controversial matter treated by the author is that of birth control. Sharp disagreement obtains among the moralists at this point. The issue is focused on this question: do the biological necessities of nature have precedence over man's power to control human reproduction? Historically, many methods have been used to control procreation such as "infanticide, abortion, celibacy, postponement of marriage, abstinence from intercourse, *coitus interruptus* and *reservatus*, castration, and various surgical operations." The advance in our thinking in this area is illustrated by the fact that there are five hundred birth control clinics at the present time in the United States.

More and more birth control is being accepted in modern society as being morally and ethically justified. The author reports a survey conducted among women in 1943 with the following responses: "Among women from twenty to thirty-five years of age, 84.9 per cent favored contraceptive advice for married women, 10 per cent opposed it, and 5 per cent were undecided." Interestingly, the survey disclosed that 69 per cent of the Catholic women interviewed favored it.

Consistently, the Catholic moralists have opposed the use of contraceptives in marriage as being antinatural. Holding to the primacy of Natural Law, they see in the use of contraceptives a violation of a natural process in reproduction which they believe God ordained, and which is to be held inviolable by man. On the other hand, Catholics give endorsement to two methods of birth control, namely, abstinence and rhythm.

The author contends that the Catholic moralists overemphasize Natural Law and therefore have been caught in the trap of biological and physiological necessity. Furthermore, nature uses sex for purposes other than reproduction. Moral integrity and man's personal freedom require that he exercise control over reproduction. Sex in human life, unlike sex among animals, was intended not only for reproduction but also to unify and enhance man's moral and emotional nature.

The problem of artificial insemination, which the author treats next, is un-



doubtedly one of the most delicate and complex opened up for discussion. Couples made childless by sterility have before them four courses: to accept stoically their childlessness; to resort to extramarital conception; to adopt someone else's child; or, to use artificial insemination.

There are two types of insemination. They are known respectively as A.I.H., from the husband, and A.I.D., from a donor. The first is more generally accepted by both Catholic and Protestant moralists. The second, A.I.D., is rigorously opposed on the whole by both groups. But this author holds that the latter method is justified morally and ethically. It has biblical sanction, he suggests, from practices in the Old Testament, according to which if a husband died, having no child, his brother, though married, was to "go in unto" the widow; and, on the other hand, as in the case of Sarah, her husband was urged to go in unto her maid that children might ensue.

The author insists that inasmuch as marriage is basically a personal relationship and not a legal contract, and where there is mutual agreement on the part of husband and wife, A.I.D., when necessary, is morally justified in the rich emotional and spiritual rewards it brings to them in the experience of family sharing.

Sterilization, like birth control and insemination, also raises many ethical implications. The writer argues that if the law will not permit unfit persons to adopt children, it should also take steps to prevent them from conceiving and bringing forth children. The view set forth is succinctly stated in these words: "We cannot escape from the conviction that it is a grave wrong and a betrayal of the Christian conception of personality, as well as against a rational conscience, to allow stunted and defective lives to be propagated when the means are available in medicine to prevent it." Compulsory sterilization of feeble-minded and hereditarily diseased persons is as morally defensible as their segregation, which deprives them of sexual freedom and makes procreation impossible.

In many ways the most interesting facet of the book is the treatment of euthanasia—"the deliberate easing into death of a patient suffering from a painful and fatal disease." It is a problem which both medical men and the clergy will be required to face more realistically in the immediate future.

Generally, both Catholic and Protestant interpreters are opposed to the practice. Dr. Fletcher lists ten main objections to euthanasia: (1) it is basically a form of suicide; (2) when administered by the physician it is a phase of murder; (3) it violates the religious belief that God alone determines when a human life shall end; (4) it runs counter to the biblical command, "Thou shalt not kill"; (5) suffering must be accepted as a part of the divine plan; (6) some patients held to be incurable do recover; (7) patients in pain are not in a position to make such serious judgments; (8) it would weaken the moral fiber of our nation; (9) the ethics of a physician forbids him to take a life; and (10) the doctors themselves do not favor euthanasia.

Against these objections, the author contends that our concepts of freedom and knowledge inhering in selfhood should afford the individual the right of choice in such a matter. Agonizing suffering often brings emotional and spiritual deterioration. We are ethically warranted in going against Natural Law by choosing to terminate a pain-ridden existence. Just as anesthetics are no longer opposed at childbirth, so, the writer insists, euthanasia should not be opposed when it is the voluntary termination of a life whose pain has already deprived it of creative self-expression.

Dr. Fletcher has made an important contribution by helpfully illuminating the relationship between medicine and morals. His is a pioneering effort, opening up fresh insights on a moral frontier which deeply concerns struggling men and women.

He bases his conclusions upon a sound foundation, namely, the inherent sacredness of personality. Personality should not be chained to the impersonal necessities of Natural Law but should be encouraged to make decisions in the areas suggested by the author in terms of freedom and knowledge. The unitive concept of personality, which rules out any notion of the soul as a vague, ethereal something, a dangling appendage to life, requires that men and women if they are to grow and to develop must use the full powers of their minds to choose and to act in moral situations. Finally, religious workers in particular will find themselves both informed and challenged in the reading of this book. It should be of special help to those interested in pastoral counseling.

LLOYD E. FOSTER

Old First Church, Presbyterian, Newark, New Jersey.

**Christian Deviations: Essays in Defence of the Christian Faith.** By HORTON DAVIES. New York: Philosophical Library, 1954. 126 pp. \$2.75.

**Jehovah's Witnesses: Who They Are, What They Teach, What They Do.** By ROYSTON PIKE. New York: Philosophical Library, 1954. 140 pp. \$2.75.

It is an intriguing experience to stand off at a safe distance and analyze objectively—if such a thing is possible—other people's religion. Here are two books which attempt to do just that, though in a somewhat different way. *Jehovah's Witnesses* centers on one group, and in brief compass tells something about the people who stand on street corners selling *The Watchtower*, and who go to prison rather than do national service. *Christian Deviations* marks out for itself a much wider canvas. This author also has a chapter devoted to Jehovah's Witnesses, but he also has chapters upon Theosophy, Christian Science, Spiritism, Seventh-Day Adventism, the Mormons, British-Israel, Moral Rearmament or the Oxford Group, Astrology, and Open-Air Religion.

In *Christian Deviations*, which the author calls "essays in defence of the Christian faith," the point is made that these various beliefs are variants from Christianity itself. The joint-senior lecturer in Church History at Mansfield and Regents Park Colleges, Oxford, Mr. Davies defends the historic Christian faith by distinguishing it from those systems which imitate it, and yet distort it by misrepresentation. Mr. Davies' classification of these groups falls into four main divisions, each of which will bear studying: (1) The denial of spiritual values and of the existence of God (this the author calls *atheism* on its intellectual side and *materialism* or secularism on its cultural and social side); (2) the claims to finality made by religions other than Christianity; (3) a Judaistic perversion of the Christian faith (under which he describes Jehovah's Witnesses, Pastor Russellites and others); (4) a Gnostic eclecticism and various theosophist adumbrations of Christianity. He has his "examples" in all these categories.

Mr. Davies writes somewhat sympathetically, for he never forgets that all these are perversions and distortions of *Christianity*. His analysis is able and striking and gives much food for thought. He sums up the implications of the sects for the "orthodox" churches thus:

"Christianity will be victorious over all its rivals when it is most true to its own inheritance. . . . If the fellowship of Christians is a genuine community and family springing from their communion with the God and Father of us all, if Christian members confess their sins in sincerity and with a desire to make reparation to those

whom they have wronged, and if they provide a way of life with opportunities of thrilling service for its younger members, Christianity need have nothing to fear from the Oxford Group Movement or Open-air Religion. If it places the doctrines of the resurrection and of the Communion of Saints in the centre of its worship, the spurious attractions of Spiritualism will be unavailing because dispelled by faith in the Risen Christ. If Christianity takes seriously the miraculous powers of faith in a wonder-working God, Christian Science will lose its hold on its followers. . . . If Christians accept the general promises of Christ, and do not try to implement His reverent silences with details drawn from their own materialistic imaginations, and show a comparable zeal for transmitting their holy faith, then the unscriptural predictions of the Seventh-Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses will deceive no Christian." (pp. 19-20)

The book by Royston Pike naturally goes into much more detail about the one group which it undertakes to examine. The various men who have led the Witnesses, their influence and teaching are rather carefully outlined: the pre-eminence of Jehovah (emphasizing justice and power more than love), the infallibility of the Bible (copiously but selectively cited), the denial that Christ is God (holding rather that he is Messiah, Logos, Son of God, and identical with the Archangel Michael!), their elaborate apocalyptic speculation, their denial of both hell and purgatory, their allegiance to a theocracy in this world, culminating in a "new earth"—all the bizarre erraticism of these zealous evangelists is outlined here. The study is largely factual, and the author acts as a reporter rather than an editor, setting down his conclusions in journalistic style.

Essential Christianity may not learn anything from the intellectual affirmations of these groups, but it can learn something from their enthusiasm and tremendous missionary fervor. St. Paul condemned those who "have zeal but not according to knowledge," but in our day those who have the true Gnosis could very well emulate the zeal of those who have it not. Truth above all, of course—not truth congealed in the deep-freeze of a fixed finality, but in the energetic activity of a dynamic Christian people!

NOLAN B. HARMON

Editor, RELIGION IN LIFE, New York City.

**Men of the High Calling: Ministers, Priests, and Rabbis—An Anthology.**

Edited by CHARLES NEIDER. New York: The Abingdon Press, 1954.  
238 pp. \$3.50.

In these times, when sectarianism seems to be taking a new lease on life, it is heartening to come upon an anthology such as this, where stories of ministers, priests and rabbis are presented side by side with no emphasis on dogma. Here they are, these guardians of the spiritual life of men, as seen by such writers as Tolstoy, Hawthorne, Werfel, Benét, and Barrie. The literary level of these stories is high; the spiritual content varies considerably in intensity. However, these are not tracts but stories culled from far and wide, written not by ministers but by men whose business it is to entertain and to interpret character. If, as occasionally is true, one of these men depicted fails to rise to the level of what we expect of spiritual leaders, we are nevertheless given a comprehensive view of the calling itself, not in sermons, but as literary men see it.

Some of the stories are simply entertaining. Surely Father Brown, Chesterton's

famous priest-detective, while fun to read about as a detective, never reaches any spiritual heights, and Mr. Thomason's Praxiteles Swan is far more dramatic in his prowess as a fighter and as a jealous lover than as a minister; while Sholem Aleichem's rabbins, though concerned with a definite moral problem, show a code of unfamiliar deviousness. Mr. Bunner's humorous story of the two churches of 'Quawket contains more perception of what is demanded of a man of high calling and, together with the quite different story, "The Altar Cloth," brings out clearly what happens to the appeaser, the one who tries to come to terms with both Caesar and God at the same time.

It may be due to the temper of the times that the two stories called "fables," by Hawthorne and Tolstoy, do not impress as once they did, while the warmth of characterization in the old favorites such as "The Little Minister," "The Stickit Minister," and "His Mother's Sermon" can still touch the heart. For all our present sophistication, warmth is still recognized and treasured wherever it is found. Dean Harcourt, placed beside these last three mentioned, is disappointing. Mr. Douglas makes a point—he always does—but his Dean Harcourt seems a cardboard saint patterned after the men who dole out advice over the radio to the troubled of spirit, or after T. S. Eliot's psychiatrist of *The Cocktail Party*, where Mr. Eliot confuses his psychiatrist with God.

The most satisfying story of all to me was Stephen Vincent Benét's "The Bishop's Beggar." It goes deeper as a fable, it remains dramatic as a tale, it shows both sides of the coin of the priestly calling and, without laboring the point, makes its demands for the responsibilities of goodness. This Bishop, saddled with responsibility for a beggar he could not even like, is three-dimensional, seen whole, and his growth from the worldly, ambitious young bishop to the humble, understanding archbishop is moving and credible. The point is clearly realized that the dividing line between kindness done because the world expects it of those in high spiritual places and kindness done for its own sake is a difficult one to cross.

I should have liked to see included in this volume the powerful story of "The Grand Inquisitor" from Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, but perhaps it would have been too controversial in tone to fit in with these tales, so refreshingly free from controversial matter. It is varied and satisfying as it stands, whether in the stories of men called to act nobly at moments of high drama, such as those of war, or in those of men doing their routine jobs with patience and humility. Some of the men shown seem conscious that special integrity is demanded of them, some seem not so conscious of this. They vary, as all human beings vary. None are dull, and a number are truly impressive.

This is an anthology designed to interest men of all creeds. It does just that, which is no small accomplishment.

NELIA GARDNER WHITE

Novelist, New Hartford, Connecticut.

**Preaching.** By WALTER RUSSELL BOWIE. New York: The Abingdon Press, 1954. 224 pp. \$2.75.

This excellent book by a master in the field will be a rewarding volume for both the student in the seminary and the parish priest, no matter how many years he has spent in the ministry. The artful way in which the author combines encouragement and warning of the price we pay for efficient service is underscored at the very outset. When he refers to the fact that learning is never finished, Dr. Bowie indicates

how men who lose their first humility, and thus become satisfied and complacent, succumb to the twin vices of the ministry, namely, laziness and conceit.

Beginning with the theme, "What Is Preaching?" Dr. Bowie discusses such subjects as "Aspects of the Preacher's Opportunity" and "Relating Theology to Life." With painful proof, he warns us of the danger of "miscellaneous volubility." Any attempt to make this a substitute for clear thinking, or scientific structure of the sermon, always leads to dismal failure. For this reason we can never presume that the Holy Spirit will "do what we ought to do." The reader will quickly see that the author does not in any way minimize, he rather magnifies, the importance of spiritual preparation. He does insist that spiritual equipment and mental discipline cannot be separated. Only when these two are united do we have sermons like "the leaping of a fountain and not like the pumping of a pump."

Preaching means hard work, and this includes "Thought, discipline, patience . . ." When the sermon begins with something that is nebulous it will end in a nebulous state. In a paragraph which both searches and sears our minds, Dr. Bowie refers to a statement of an old German minister, quoted by Martin Niemöller: "As for me, the Holy Ghost never spoke to me in the pulpit. Yes, I remember, he did speak to me once. When I was going down the pulpit steps after a poor sort of sermon, the Holy Ghost spoke to me. He said only three words, and what he said was, 'Heinrich, you're lazy.'" (pp. 33f.)

The chapter relating theology to life is another effective demonstration of the fact that techniques and content of message belong together. Those few individuals who sometimes slurringly refer to homiletics as part of the "practical field" do not realize what a high compliment they are paying "the art of preaching"! Dr. Bowie rightly points out that not merely does a man's creed matter: this fact will be vividly manifested both in the preacher's messages and in the lives of those who learn to listen understandingly and responsively to his messages. The kind of a God we have, what we believe about Christ, convictions concerning the validity of ethics, involving all human conduct and therefore history, our faith in tomorrow—all these are evidences of how homiletics concerns every area of life and underscore the fact that nothing is foreign to this field.

There is another characteristic of this helpful volume which makes it appeal especially to the mature student of homiletics. Dr. Bowie does not presume to give such minute directions about every phase of preaching that the one who follows his suggestions will find himself a prisoner of rules. Rather, he presents certain outstanding principles which serve as guideposts. This, manifestly, is the modern approach to preaching which deserves and will receive attention and increasing interest on the part of those who recognize the importance of necessary discipline and, at the same time, happily acknowledge the varying capacities and endowments of hosts of ministers.

G. RAY JORDAN

Professor of Preaching, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Georgia.

**Preaching in a Scientific Age.** By A. C. CRAIG. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954. 119 pp. \$2.50.

**The Preacher and His Audience.** By WEBB B. GARRISON. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1954. 285 pp. \$3.00.

For the most part it would seem that books for the preacher carry an extra burden of words for the amount of material in them. Perhaps this is so because



of their birth. They rise out of the spoken word, or out of words that were written to be spoken.

If what has been said is true of some books written for the preacher, it is most emphatically not true of *Preaching in a Scientific Age*. Here we have Dr. Craig's Warrack Lectures for 1953, and they have been put together with an almost poetic urgency toward condensed and moving language. There are five solid and satisfying chapters: "The Dilemma of the Preacher," "Preaching and Biblical Criticism," "Preaching on Miracle," "Preaching on the Resurrection," and "Preaching on the Last Times." It can be seen at once that the author is concerned with what concerns preachers and their people today.

There are lightning strokes of humor which arrive and leave almost at once. He touches on pulpit foibles like "round-the-year butterfly-preaching—a perpetual, incalculable fluttering from one flowery text to another," and then tells of another sort of preaching which is so dry that the people begin to long for "a touch of the vanished butterfly."

The book has what architects call "mass." It builds momentum as you read and always carries a wealth of over- and under-tones. It mingles substance and symbol in a memorable style. The materials are all homogenized, the style is "lucid, crisp and unequivocal." And always he has in mind the people who gather for worship and to whom the preacher must address his message,—". . . persons, each of them a world, each of them a citadel of privacy complete with moat and portcullis, tapestried chambers, dungeons and ghosts of the past."

It is a sobering book because one sees the bigness of his task and the littleness of himself. Just as one is about to give up hope there is a sentence like this one: "The Resurrection is . . . the supreme instance of the infinite resourcefulness of God the Father." And the thought comes that the God of the Resurrection can surely make me a better man, a more thoughtful shepherd and a stronger preacher.

To turn to the second volume under review, *The Preacher and His Audience*. David Wayne, the actor, has recently told how he believes that a truly creative performance carries an "electric impact" which grows even more intense when the audience responds, so that the excitement flows back and forth across the footlights in a "wonderful chain reaction." It is true that the preacher is not an actor, but he does hope for a preaching experience which is not unlike Mr. Wayne's description. He knows that it is much too difficult for him to do all the preaching. When the pulpit is at its best he feels that the pew is involved. Listeners get to preaching to themselves, and to one another, and to the preacher. They go home with the exhilarating sense that something happened to them, and that they helped something happen; but most of all that God is clearer and nearer, now.

Mr. Garrison has organized a book around this idea of putting listeners into the sermon. This is a step beyond putting a sermon into the listeners. His twelve chapters range over a large terrain: motivation and communication, style and sources, form and order, humor and emotion, illustration and visual element, plagiarism and the development of originality. Although it is impossible for him to treat in detail many of the fresh ideas he presents, there is enough to get a man thinking on his own.

The bibliography is sixteen and a half pages long, and ranges from G. L. Freeman's *Dr. Hollingworth as a Technique of Relaxation* to W. Mac-Neile Dixon's *The Human Situation*; and from Barth's *Romans* to John A. Sawhill's *The Use of Athletic Metaphors in the Biblical Homilies of St. John Chrysostom*.

*The Preacher and His Audience* is full of common and uncommon sense. It

cuts a preacher down to size, and then builds him up on a different model. Always the emphasis is on what the stated truth can do in the faith and conduct of an aroused hearer. The book is worth more than its price and will help any preacher who studies it move his pulpit a little closer to the pew.

RAYMOND I. LINDQUIST

First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood, Hollywood, California.

**Patterns of Protestant Church Music.** By ROBERT M. STEVENSON. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1953. viii-219 pp. \$4.00.

This is a stimulating book, the product of a competent scholar. It is well documented, written in a free-flowing style, and brings to light a great many facts concerning a number of musicians and religious poets, most of whose names are familiar. But one wonders why it is called *Patterns of Protestant Church Music*. It does not seem to be that at all; rather, it is an interesting series of essays having to do with Luther, Calvin, Merbecke, Bach, Handel, Watts, the Wesleys, Neale, and Sankey.

In his summary of the chapter on Luther he writes that Luther "lifted the art to a loftier level than it has attained anywhere else in evangelical thinking," that he "placed it on a pedestal," and that "a practical implementation of his ideals would be today 'a consummation devoutly to be wished.'" All of which is true, but he does not tell us why Luther's ideals have not succeeded in becoming implemented. Why, beyond the various Lutheran bodies, has the chorale failed to appeal to the great mass of Protestants?

Of Calvin, Dr. Stevenson emphasizes those ideals of the great man which failed of accomplishment—his objection to the use of any instruments of music in worship services, to polyphonic music, to the use of any other than "inspired" texts.

What is written about Merbecke is excellent and illuminating, but disappointing for his failure to mention William Byrd and Thomas Tallis, whose contributions to church music certainly were as great, or greater, than those made by John Tavenor and Christopher Tye.

More attention is paid to Bach than to any of the others, three chapters and some thirty-eight pages, little of which is new except, perhaps, some details of his controversy with Ernesti, his superior, and his theological convictions. For the benefit of the uninitiated it would have been well for the author to have explained the difference between a "Cantor" and a "Capellmeister."

In the light of the book's title, why a chapter on Handel? The statistics on the *Messiah* libretto are interesting, but have nothing to do with church music. So it is with Isaac Watts, whose "Flights of Fancy" make delightful reading, but deals only with his religious poetry, fanciful and otherwise.

Dr. Stevenson has provided a very able discussion of John Wesley's *Charlestown Collection*, 1737, and leaves an impression it was the first of a long line of Methodist hymnals. Even though many of the psalms and hymns which appeared therein were included in later collections of the Wesley brothers, this *Charlestown* book was compiled by Wesley with the hope it might be acceptable for use in the Anglican Church, which had not then and has not now any "official" hymnal. John Wesley was "the instigator and, throughout, the controlling influence in the outburst of evangelical song"; but it was his brother, Charles, through his writing hymns in a great variety of meters, who stimulated the many amateur musicians in England to write

tunes in quite a different style from those which were in common use in the middle of the eighteenth century.

It is difficult to discern any patterns of Protestant church music set by Samuel and Charles Wesley, sons of Charles the hymn writer, fine musicians as they were. And Samuel Sebastian, best known of the musical members of the Wesley family, composed in the English Cathedral style, a style he did not originate; he just did a better job than had been done up to his time and has rarely been excelled since. He also wrote scores of hymn tunes, only a few of which may be found in contemporary hymnals. The Lutherans seem more inclined to use them than are the other Protestant denominations. This is a matter of regret, as is the fact that but few of his anthems are now heard in our churches.

The chapter in which the gospel hymn is discussed is one of the best. It is a joy to find a scholar of Dr. Stevenson's calibre treating it so factually and so sympathetically; he shows no evidence of prejudice. When he says "Gospel hymnody has been a plough digging up the hardened surfaces of paved minds . . . where delicacy or dignity can make no impress, gospel hymnody stands up triumphing. . . . In an age when religion must win mass approval in order to survive . . . gospel hymnody is inevitable," he is simply telling the truth. In the appendices, the music of the Roman Church and that of the Jewish *Union Hymnal* is treated briefly but adequately, and the short-title bibliography listing 170 authoritative works on church music might well be considered a fine source list by librarians.

The book is one of the most interesting and engrossing this reviewer has read in many years. It is so filled with interesting, valuable information that every church musician, every minister, every lover of church music should have a copy in his library. I recommend it without qualification.

ROBERT G. MCCUTCHAN

Visiting Professor of History of Church Music, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

**So Little for the Mind.** By HILDA NEATBY. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1953. 384 pp. \$3.00.

In the disordered plight in which education presently finds itself, it is a Canadian who states the case for the "sound tradition of a liberal academic education" as opposed to the modern "progressivist type," and states it well. In this controversial book, a Professor of History at the University of Saskatchewan and the only woman member of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences delivers a smashing indictment of modern education in English-speaking Canada. The book has gone through several printings. That her findings apply as well to the schools in our own country is obvious.

While it is true that teachers help to mold the future, they necessarily reflect the age in which they function and their methods must be altered accordingly. But so preoccupied have been the present-day educators with the democratic equality of their pupils and with keeping them happy and protected at all costs, that their system is turning out future citizens who cannot read, write or think—citizens who are mentally and morally undisciplined.

"Since the eighteenth century," says Dr. Neatby, "the west has been trying to replace faith by reason, aristocratic distinctions by democratic equality, humanity in its broad sense by concern for material well-being." She adds elsewhere, "The

danger of expressing democratic equality in terms of a dull level of mediocrity, the fatuous worship of the common man not because he is a man but because he is common is too familiar to need emphasizing."

The training schools for teachers in Canada (which are strongly under the influence of similar schools in the United States) come in for no less censure. Here the emphasis is laid upon techniques and methodology, not upon the tradition values of scholarship and broad general culture.

In her seventh Chapter Dr. Neatby voices the increasing protest of the English-speaking world against present trends in education. She calls to witness such men as T. S. Eliot, Bernard Iddings Bell, Sir Richard Livingstone of Oxford University, Robert Hutchins, as well as nonprofessionals from Canada and teachers belonging to the Canadian school system itself.

There is increasing alarm throughout the English-speaking world, says Dr. Neatby, over the mental starvation diet now in vogue. "The mind must be nourished, disciplined, and exercised in order that man may be fit for intellectual freedom and moral choice." Furthermore, modern education, in its renunciation of absolute standards, brings about a weakening of respect for law and authority as such and a dulling of the discrimination between right and wrong.

It is clear that our children are bored, uncertain of their place in the scheme of things, and afraid. It is high time we return to the traditional study of our civilization and of the heroes of the past who made its advance possible. No psychological services can take the place in character building of contact with the greatest deeds and the greatest men of all ages.

The protagonists of a liberal arts education cannot afford to miss Dr. Neatby's book and the ammunition it provides for their cause.

REBECCA LAMAR HARMON

South Orange, New Jersey.

**Customs and Cultures: Anthropology for Christian Missions.** By EUGENE A. NIDA. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954. xiv-306 pp. \$4.00.

Although the study of cultural anthropology is considered a "must" in the preparation of many of our present-day missionaries, many of the books on this subject are too technical and too uninteresting to attract people to what should be and can be a most fascinating study.

Dr. Eugene Nida, in his book entitled *Customs and Cultures*, has made anthropology come alive. Not only should this volume be studied by all missionaries, it ought to be read and pondered by ministers, travelers, public speakers and all who are concerned with people as people. Dr. Nida, Translations Secretary of the American Bible Society, has written out of his years of rich experience in many parts of the world. One senses the author's love of people, his concern that they should be understood and loved. Throughout the book one is aware of his deep Christian convictions and his earnest desire to see the whole of life of all peoples permeated by the Christian gospel.

If you are inclined to feel that a book on anthropology is dull, you will be agreeable surprised as you read *Customs and Culture*. A glance at some of the chapter headings ought to arouse your curiosity: "Shocks and Surprises," "Race and Ranting," "Hoes and Headaches," "Devils and Doubts." Each chapter is filled with concrete examples to illustrate the anthropological facts about which the

author is writing. Did you know why the Navahos thought Christianity a religion which dealt with juniper trees? Or how the New Caledonians treat a sweet potato?

One is struck with the wide range of examples used by the author to demonstrate his points. This wide range awakened in this reader a new sense of appreciation of the cultures of many peoples little known or unknown to most of us. There were times when one wishes the author might have had time and space to go into more detail about some culture patterns.

A thoughtful reading of this volume will help those who are concerned with world problems to realize how important an understanding of culture is in helping peoples to adjust to one another. Dr. Nida points out the values and weaknesses in highlighting the cultural contrasts between peoples. He discusses the anthropological implications of selectivity, the things in culture we take for granted, values placed on certain aspects of culture and cultural relativism. These he finally sums up in the sentences, "The Bible presents realistically the facts of culture and the plan of God, by which He continues to work in the hearts of men 'till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' (Ephesians 4:13). The Christian position is not one of static conformance to dead rules, but of dynamic obedience to a living God" (p. 52).

Dr. Nida insists that effective missionary work is impossible unless the missionaries identify themselves with the people, communicating their message in language understandable by the people they are trying to reach. All who are striving to make Christ known to others—whether in their own culture or another culture—would do well to study carefully the final chapter, "New Solutions to Old Problems." Here the author is concerned with the development of the church, and he points out the need for an appreciation of the anthropological problems and an awareness of the cultural situation.

The value of the volume is enhanced by the appendix which contains an excellent outline on "Practical Suggestions Concerning Ways in Which Missionaries May Acquire Helpful Anthropological Background and Field Data."

*Customs and Culture* ought to be required reading for all missionaries. However, all who are concerned with people will find it a very valuable book, written in a most readable manner.

GLORA M. WYSNER

Secretary, International Missionary Council, New York City.

**Fifty Years in China: The Memoirs of John Leighton Stuart, Missionary and Ambassador.** Prefatory Note by GENERAL GEORGE C. MARSHALL, Introduction by Dr. Hu Shih. New York: Random House, 1954. 346 pp. \$5.00.

This is a book of insights, written by a man who had seen China for many years, and who had learned to analyze whatever was brought before him. Thus when Pearl Harbor was already a fact, and when men like Ambassador Stuart, Dr. Henry S. Houghton, and Mr. Trevor Bowen were led off to an internment camp, they were kept incommunicado. The other enemy nationals were left relatively free. The theory seemed to be that such institutions as Peking Union Medical College and Yenching University could not possibly have been created by private philanthropy or religious zeal. They were undoubtedly, the Japanese military



thought, instruments of the American Government for winning the hearts of Chinese youth and thus thwarting their own imperialistic designs.

It was then that Dr. Stuart wrote: "We are caught on the surface of a catastrophic storm and are flung into an eddy from which we cannot foresee when or how we shall be released. . . . I now have the opportunity to test out and profit by Christian faith as a solace in a time of bitter disappointment and when facing a future full of harrowing uncertainties. If, as I have often preached or urged upon others in private, it does not matter what happens to any of us so much as how he takes what happens, then I now have a chance to apply my own medicine."

In the introduction by Dr. Hu Shih, former ambassador of China to the United States, we read, "I want to voice most sincerely my hearty agreement with the reflections of my old friend Dr. Stuart on the China 'White Paper,' and on what policy his great country should pursue in regard to China. When in 1949 I read Secretary Dean Acheson's Letter of Transmittal of the China 'White Paper,' and came to these sentences, 'The ominous result of the civil war in China was beyond the control of the United States . . . ' then, having read those sentences, I wrote on the margin: Matthew 27:24. This is the text: 'When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just man: see ye to it.'" Clearly, both Dr. Hu Shih and his fellow-ambassador, Dr. Stuart, believed that, because of its great power and its undisputed world leadership, the United States was not "innocent of the blood" of fallen China.

Later in the narrative, Dr. Stuart indicates his reasons for holding certain beliefs about the reasons for a global strategy for peace. He points out that perhaps many Americans would think that any effective assistance to China might lead America to become inextricably involved in the affairs of China.

Much of the discussion, in the latter part of the narrative, deals with the position and activities of the Chinese Generalissimo. He was ready to propose that Dr. Hu Shih should be made vice-president, and he was found to be asking why American military aid toward ending the Chinese civil war should have failed. All through this period, the Chinese knew of Dr. Stuart's love for their country and his concern for their national welfare. This meant, of course, that they trusted him implicitly. Had he not devoted the course of his life to the preservation of China's national freedom, and of her fine national culture, both so vitally related to the peace of the Pacific and the progressive welfare of all mankind?

EDWARD H. HUME, M.D.

New York City. (Former medical missionary to China.)

## Book Notices

Oxford University Press has published a large and beautiful volume, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, by George Ferguson (\$10.00). This is a fascinating compendium, containing over 350 illustrations, sixteen in full color, all from Renaissance paintings. "The artists of the Renaissance crystallized and ordered Christian symbolism as it has been known and experienced through the entire Christian era. It has remained because it was the perfecting in art form of the common experience of Christian man." The author is Rector of Saint Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Parish, Tucson, Arizona; he has been assisted by the staff of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation with its extensive Collection of Renaissance Art, and by Mark Voris, assistant professor of art at the University of Arizona.

Another Oxford book is *A Treasury of the Kingdom, An Anthology*, compiled by E. A. Blackburn (of Kent, England) and others (\$3.50). "We believe this is the most distinguished anthology of religious writings to appear in many years. . . . The book will appeal to many for occasional inspirational reading; for others it will be a reference book to be treasured." Poetry and prose are interspersed. Selections are included from Plato, Seneca, Asoka, St. Augustine, St. Francis, Luther, Shakespeare, Donne, Brother Lawrence, Fox, Penn, Woolman, Shelley, Keats, Lincoln, Emily Brontë, Hopkins, Tagore, Chesterton, Whitehead, Evelyn Underhill, Temple, Shaw, Toynbee, Nehru, Schweitzer, Inge, Eliot, Dostoevsky, Turgenev.

In the present flood of World Council literature it is useful to have such a concise little book as *Evanston: An Interpretation*, by James H. Nichols (Harper, \$2.00). This able church historian has written for clergy and laity "an informative on-the-spot description and evaluation of what Evanston was and what it meant." Chapter heads include: (1) Those Who Were Not There; (2) Those Who Were There; (3) "Staying Together" in a Divided World; (4) "Concerning the Contribution for the Saints" (interchurch aid and service to refugees); (5) The Worship of the Assembly; (6) Jesus Christ, the Hope of the World; (7) Our Unity in Christ—and Our Disunity as Churches; (8) Christian Responsibility in the World (economic and political problems); (9) "The Middle Wall of Partition" (race problems).

*The Biblical Doctrine of Man in Society*, by G. Ernest Wright, is a paper-covered booklet published for the World Council of Churches by the S. C. M. Press and distributed in this country by Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 81 W. Van Buren Street, Chicago 5, Illinois. This second "Ecumenical Biblical Study" is the fine fruit of individual and collective work by a group of scholars in or near Chicago. It was felt that a unified document by Dr. Wright based on their various papers would be preferable to a symposium.

The Abingdon Press has brought out a small challenging book for ministers, by Gerald Kennedy, entitled *Who Speaks for God?* (\$2.50.) Stimulated by Norman Cousins' title, "Who Speaks for Man?" Bishop Kennedy points out that it is a still more august and responsible task to speak for God, to bring his living Word to man. He who does, must speak "for persons," "for spiritual," "for freedom," "for hope." It is good to know that Umphrey Lee's *The Lord's Horseman* has been put out again (Abingdon, \$2.75). An authoritative study of John Wesley the man, this has long been esteemed a leader among the biographies of Wesley. Revised and brought up to date by Dr. Lee, the new edition will take its place with the growing number of books interpreting Wesley and the Methodist Church to the world.

*Guide to Community Action*, by Mark S. Matthews (Harper, \$4.00), is "a source book for citizen volunteers." The author is a practicing attorney, former national president of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, and with varied experience in public administration. This is described as "The most comprehensive book of its kind yet published for the use of volunteer organizations, including detailed sources of aid available for community programs." Part I offers suggestions for forming and maintaining effective groups; Part II deals with the major fields of group interest (community arts, recreation, health, welfare, religion, international relations, education, labor-management, conservation, government, etc.).

The 1954 issue of the annual *The Philosophical Forum*, published by the Boston University Philosophical Club, is a memorial volume dedicated to Edgar Sheffield Brightman. This can be secured from 725 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston 15, Massachusetts, at \$1.50 per single copy, two or more copies \$1.25 each. The issue opens with a biographical sketch of Dr. Brightman and a selected bibliography of his writings, both by Jannette E. Newhall; and two interestingly different photographs are included. L. Harold DeWolf, Peter A. Bertocci, José A. Fránquiz, Swami Akhilananda and other friends of Dr. Brightman contribute articles.

Edwin E. Aubrey presents a significant thesis in his Ayer Lectures at Colgate-Rochester subsequently published by Harper (\$2.50): *Secularism: A Myth*. (1) "The current attack on secularism has become so diffuse as to be very misleading, and the issue needs to be redefined." (2) "The history of Christianity" gives grounds for stating that "the proposed dissociation of the church from culture would be fatal to the development of Christianity itself." (3) "There have been spiritual values in secular movements which . . . should in plain justice be acknowledged." (4) Therefore "we need a new strategy which is at once humbler and bolder, less plaintive and more responsible."

*A Democratic Manifesto*, by Samuel Enoch Stumpf, is subtitled, "The Impact of Dynamic Christianity Upon Public Life and Government." The author is professor of philosophy and lecturer in jurisprudence in the Law School at Vanderbilt University, and the book is published by that university's Press (Nashville, Tenn., \$2.75). He examines the relationship of democratic faith to Christian faith, analyzes "the role and rule of law," "democracy as a moral enterprise," its "cumulative heritage," and "the motive of man in democracy"; finds that the motive of Christian love is needed by democracy in order to preserve its freedom.

*The World of Albert Schweitzer* is a new and different Schweitzer book by Erica Anderson (Harper, \$5.00)—a volume of 169 splendid photographs depicting his many-sided life. The majority of them, of course, show his life at the Lambarene hospital; the last section of the book shows "Europe and the Alsatian Homeland," with glimpses of his early life, his musicianship, and his travels. The text and captions are done by Eugene Exman of Harper & Brothers. A moving and beautiful book.

Two appealing Lenten books have reached us too late for review: *The Passion of the King*, by Frederick C. Grant (Macmillan, \$2.50), a moving study of Holy Week; and *The Voice From the Cross*, by Andrew W. Blackwood, Jr., pastor and chaplain (Baker Book House, \$1.50), sermons on the Seven Words.

E. H. L.

